

# THE MILITANT

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## U.S. forces launch new attacks on Najaf, other Iraqi cities

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

U.S. occupying forces that have surrounded Najaf with heavy armor for weeks struck deep into the southern Iraqi city May 6, capturing the governor's office and killing dozens of Iraqis, including supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army who defended their positions nearby.

The attack was part of a U.S.-led military offensive aimed at crushing forces loyal to al-Sadr in their stronghold. The Shiite cleric launched a number of attacks on occupying forces in late March after being provoked by the occupation regime's closure of a newspaper associated with

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## Meat packers in N.Y. win union vote

BY DON MACKLE

BRONX, New York—"We did it!" said John Jimenez with a broad smile and a thumbs-up sign as he walked out of work at Garden Manor Farms May 4 to join co-workers celebrating their union organizing victory at the Hunts Point Meat Market here. This is a boost to other union organizing efforts in New York City's largest meat market, Jimenez and other workers said.

Garden Manor workers voted that day 17 to 4 in favor of joining United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 342. Ten other ballots cast were challenged either by the union or the company, leaving the UFCW backers with a majority no matter what the verdict on the votes in dispute.

Jimenez served as the observer at the

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## Striking Utah miners speak at UMWA locals in West

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL AND ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Coal miners on strike against C.W. Mining here were invited the first week of May to speak at several United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) locals in the region about their strike, which is into its seventh month.

On May 2, four of the coal strikers from the Huntington mine, known as Co-Op, spoke at the UMWA Local 1984 meeting in Rangely, Colorado. This local organizes coal miners at the Deserado mine, who had walked out for two months in 1999. Local 1984 has supported the Co-Op strikers with a shipment of food, financial donations, and by sending representatives to take part in solidarity rallies in Huntington.

This was the first time, however, that the Co-Op miners had addressed the local. Strikers Jesús Salazar, Ana Maria Sánchez, Alyson Kennedy, and Bill Estrada spoke

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# Systematic abuse in Iraq mirrors prisons in U.S.

Humiliation of prisoners is feature of every imperialist war

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—More details of the systematic humiliation and physical abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. military police and intelligence officers in prisons run by the occupation authorities in Iraq are becoming public. U.S. government officials are trying to deal with the worldwide outrage by appearing in congressional hearings and the media and blaming a small number of U.S. troops for the brutal acts.

This abuse mirrors similar practices carried out in jails across the United States. Some of the National Guard personnel now under investigation for the torture of Iraqi inmates got their training as prison guards in the United States, as did some of the "private contractors" involved. This degradation of prisoners has been a feature of every imperialist war—from Algeria to the Congo and from Korea to Vietnam—and has been carried out by capitalist powers acting on their own or under the blue helmets of the United Nations. Washington has carried out most of these assaults abroad under Democratic administrations with liberals heading the Department of Defense and the Pentagon.

Testifying before a May 7 televised hearing by the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, U.S. secretary of



Getty/AFP/Marwan Naamani

**Iraqis preparing to go to Friday prayers in Baghdad May 7 protest U.S. military patrol in neighborhood. Routine physical abuse of Iraqi prisoners by the U.S. military has fueled anger against U.S. occupation.**

defense Donald Rumsfeld said that not all the evidence has been made public about abuse of Iraqi war prisoners. "There are a lot more photographs and videos that exist," Rumsfeld said. "If these were released to the public, obviously it's going to make matters worse."

"These events occurred under my watch," Rumsfeld stated, "apologizing" to the Iraqis mistreated by U.S. military personnel and saying the abuse was "un-American." He promised to punish "those who have committed wrongdoing," while alleging that "these terrible acts were perpetrated by a small number of the U.S. military."

A number of Democratic Party politicians—including House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, senators Thomas Harkin and Edward Kennedy, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus—used the occasion to call for Rumsfeld's resignation and to argue that a Democrat in the White House would do a better job than George W. Bush in pursuing Washington's "war on terrorism."

"We need a new secretary of defense," Kennedy told the media here. "My own preference would be Secretary [of State] Colin Powell. He knows how to win a war

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## U.S. prison construction booms, abuse rampant

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

A new report shows that prison construction across the United States has undergone an unprecedented boom in the last quarter-century, as the federal and state governments have jailed increasing numbers of people for longer and longer periods.

The report, titled *The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America's Prison Expansion*, was released by the Urban Institute in April. The study focused on the changes in the last 25 years in the 10 states with the largest prison increases—California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois,

Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Texas. Entire communities are now dependent economically on the mushrooming prisons.

The construction boom is fueled by the sharp and continuing rise in incarceration. Between 1980 and 2002 the number of those held in state or federal prisons increased from just over half a million to 2,033,000. People behind bars, on parole, or on probation more than tripled over the same period to 6.7 million.

Recent reports by Reuters and other media, based in part on facts provided by the

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**1996 assault on prisoner at Brazoria County jail, Texas. Scene was taped as part of a training video for prison guards. In Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia and other states similar practices are rampant, but are virtually never documented through photos.**

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# Mexico, Peru gov'ts recall ambassadors from Havana

BY DOUG NELSON

The governments of Peru and Mexico announced May 2 that they were withdrawing their ambassadors from Cuba. Mexico City also immediately expelled a political advisor in the Cuban embassy there and gave the Cuban ambassador to Mexico, Jorge Bolaños Suárez, 48 hours to leave the country.

The two Latin American governments took these measures the day after a May Day speech by Cuban president Fidel Castro. In his remarks, Castro had criticized these governments, among others, for voting in favor of a U.S.-orchestrated resolution narrowly adopted by the United Nations human rights commission two weeks earlier. The resolution condemned Havana for alleged human rights violations.

At the May Day celebration in Havana's Revolution Square, attended by more than 1 million people, Castro said the governments that voted for the UN resolution were subservient to Washington. "There were seven from Latin America, four of whom suffer from great economic and social poverty, are highly dependent, and have governments obliged to be totally abject," Castro said. He added that the fifth government, that of Peru, "provides an example of the degree of servility and dependence into which imperialism... [has] led many countries in Latin America."

"The worst and most humiliating part for Mexico was that the news about its vote in Geneva... were announced in Washington," Castro said in his speech.

The resolution Castro was referring to was submitted to the UN human rights commission by the government of Honduras under pressure from Washington. On April 15 the commission adopted it in a 22-21 vote, with 10 abstentions. This is an annual ritual by the U.S. rulers, which is part of Washington's propaganda war against the Cuban Revolution. This year, the U.S. government and its allies in Europe and elsewhere used as their main rationalization to get backing for the "human rights" resolution the arrests and convictions a year ago

by Cuban authorities of 75 opponents of the Cuban Revolution on charges of collaborating with a hostile state power—Washington—in its campaign to subvert Cuban sovereignty and overthrow the revolutionary government. The resolution demanded that Havana allow UN "human rights" inspectors into the country, which Cuba refused to do.

The same day the UN human rights commission passed this resolution, Cuba put forward another resolution at the UN General Assembly condemning human rights violations by Washington for its treatment of some 600 prisoners it has been holding indefinitely at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo, Cuba. Castro recently described the prison as "a concentration camp where not a single right is recognized." The Cuban government subsequently suspended its effort to put this resolution to a vote, citing pressures by Washington on many governments to stop it from even getting on the floor of the United Nations. "We are going to continue pursuing this issue," said Cuba's foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque at the time. "We will bring back the project at the appropriate time."

### ‘Cannon fodder for imperialism’

In his May Day speech, Castro said the Spanish government under the previous conservative administration of José Maria Aznar, had recruited "young Dominicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans to be sent as canon fodder to Iraq." This statement spurred the Nicaraguan government, along with that of Honduras, to publicly criticize Cuba on May 4. The next day, Managua also filed a formal complaint with the Cuban government about this remark.

In response to these punitive actions against Cuba by several capitalist governments in Latin America, demonstrations have taken place in both Mexico and Peru. According to the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina, "A seven-block long column of union, social and political organizations marched in Lima, Peru, showing solidar-



Reuters/Rafael Perez

**Massive crowd at May Day rally in Havana. Following criticisms in Fidel Castro's speech at this rally, the governments of Mexico and Peru withdrew ambassadors from Cuba.**

ity with Cuba, concluding with a protest in front of the Peruvian Foreign Ministry." More than 2,000 people protested the expulsion of the Cuban ambassador from Mexico, marching from Mexico City's Angel of Independence monument to the presidential residence Los Pinos.

The Mexican government blamed Cuba for interfering in its internal affairs for remarks made by Cuba's Foreign Ministry related to a Mexican businessman who fled to Cuba after allegedly holding meetings in Mexico involving two Cuban diplomats without going through diplomatic channels. The Cuban diplomats denied the charges.

The businessman, Carols Ahumada, fled to Cuba in February after a videotape was broadcast on Mexican television showing him giving money to officials of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). The PRD is a bourgeois party that's part of the opposition to the ruling conservative National Action Party (PAN), led by Mexico's president Vicente Fox.

On March 10, Mexican officials issued a warrant for Ahumada's arrest on charges of fraud and money laundering for an unrelated incident. On Mexico City's request, Havana extradited the businessman to Mexico on April 28. Cuba's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that Cuba "in no way wishes to meddle in the internal affairs of Mexico. We have been unduly mixed up in this scandal."

On May 5, Pérez Roque said that "Cuba and Mexico are living their worst moment in more than 100 years of diplomacy." The Mexican government is the only Latin American government that has never broken diplomatic ties with Cuba.

### Washington's threats

Two days earlier, a U.S. government commission headed by Secretary of State Colin Powell submitted a report to the president on recommendations for future policy on Cuba. According to the *Miami Herald*, it includes a plan to use EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft for "psychological operations broadcast" to break through Cuba's jamming of "Radio Martí" and "TV Martí," which Washington has been using for some

time to broadcast propaganda against the revolutionary government. The aircraft has been used in Bosnia, Kosova, Haiti, and Panama for similar operations.

According to the *New York Times*, the Powell recommendations call for "scaling back family visits from once a year to once every three years, and cutting back on educational travel." Cuban Americans are permitted so far to visit relatives on the island once annually.

The *Miami Herald* also said that the report recommends cutting in half the \$164 a day U.S. visitors can legally spend in Cuba, eliminating a provision allowing U.S. travelers to bring back \$100 worth of goods and restricting legal travel by Cuban-Americans to direct relatives. The reports also recommends allocating \$59 million for these efforts over the next two years, \$36 million of which is earmarked to finance counterrevolutionary groups inside Cuba.

Responding to news that this U.S. report was about to be issued, Castro said in his May Day speech: "Now they are once again making themselves hoarse shouting threats of upcoming measures to affect our economy and destabilize the country. They would do well to return the five prisoners of the empire to us, who with unequalled dignity are withstanding the most shameful and cruel case of human rights violations." Castro was referring to five Cuban revolutionaries serving draconian sentences in U.S. jails on frame-up charges brought by the FBI, including conspiracy to commit espionage for the Cuban government.

"To those who persist in their efforts to destroy the revolution, I simply say, in the name of the crowd gathered here on this May 1," Castro said, "Long live socialism! Homeland or death!"

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Maori march in Auckland, New Zealand, April 27.

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# Bishop chastises New Jersey governor

## Catholic prelate threatens to refuse Communion to McGreevey over divorce, right to choose

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

NEWARK, New Jersey—Adding to the controversy in the Catholic Church over women's rights, Bishop Joseph Galante announced April 29 that he would not administer Holy Communion to state governor James McGreevey at Mass the following day—his first service as bishop of Camden, New Jersey. The reason? McGreevey had reportedly divorced and remarried without seeking annulment of his first marriage from the church, and states his support for the right of women to choose abortion.

The action against McGreevey, along with possible similar steps the Catholic Church is contemplating against Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry—the first Catholic to run for president on a major party ticket since John F. Kennedy—are rearguard efforts by the church hierarchy to counter the historic trend in favor of women's rights.

McGreevey did not attend the service, saying he had longstanding appointments elsewhere. Church officials said that the governor had previously told them he would be there.

Galante said at the April 29 news conference that the governor's support for a woman's right to choose and for stem cell research were contrary to church doctrine. He made a special point of his charge that McGreevey divorced and then remarried without obtaining an official annulment of his first marriage.

The bishop said that if McGreevey presented himself for Communion, a key aspect of the Catholic Mass, then he would "give him a blessing" instead. "In his case, he can't go to Communion," he insisted.

McGreevey refused to comment publicly on the bishop's accusation about his divorce. "The governor has remarried but he has never discussed whether he sought or received an annulment," said his spokesman, Micah Rasmussen. "It is something he always considered a private matter."

After the ceremony, a spokesman for the bishop said that Galante had been speaking hypothetically on this matter, and "did not know the status of McGreevey's previous marriage." Neither side backed off on other issues in dispute, however.

McGreevey's position of support for a woman's right to choose, which he contrasts to his personal opposition to abortion, has particularly incensed church leaders.

One month earlier, Bishop John Smith of Trenton said that when the governor "refers to himself as a devout Catholic and supports legislation and programs that are contrary to the teaching of the Holy Father and the bishops, he is not a devout Catholic."

McGreevey "cannot compromise what it means to be a Catholic," said Smith. "I speak as your bishop, for the devout Catholics of the Diocese of Trenton. Jim McGreevey does not." Trenton is the state seat of government.

Reporting the comments, the New Jersey *Star Ledger* said, "McGreevey has long highlighted his Irish Catholic roots, both on the campaign trail and as a mayor, state lawmaker and governor. But his support for abortion rights and the death penalty have put him at odds with the church, and he recently signed laws allowing stem cell research and domestic partnership, both opposed by the Vatican."

Without mentioning McGreevey by name, Newark archbishop John Myers weighed in on the issue in a pastoral statement released May 5.

"That some Catholics...are willing to allow others to continue directly to kill the innocent is a grave scandal," wrote the archbishop under the heading, "Communion is not private." He went on, "The situation is much much worse when these same leaders receive the Eucharist [Communion] when they are not objectively in communion with Christ and His Church. Their objective dishonesty serves to compound the scandal."

In other words, Catholic politicians who do not toe the line on the church's abortion policy should not seek Communion.

"With abortion," Myers said, "there can be no legitimate diversity of opinion."

That same day, McGreevey announced that he would not receive Communion at public services. He "refused to say if he would take the sacrament from a priest in private," reported the Associated Press.

"I believe it's a false choice in America between one's faith and constitutional obligation," McGreevey said. "In America we have a longstanding policy of separation between church and state."

### Kerry also under fire

The New Jersey governor is not the only prominent Catholic politician to draw fire from members of the church hierarchy. The *Washington Post* reported April 24 that



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

**April 25 massive march on Washington to support a woman's right to choose abortion included many Catholics, like the woman above.**

church officials in the United States are debating "how to respond to Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kerry's position in favor of abortion rights."

The *Post* quoted the comments of Vatican official Cardinal Francis Arinze, who said in Rome April 23 that a politician who supports abortion rights is "not fit" to receive Communion.

According to the *Washington Post*, Arinze also "made clear that decisions about whether to deny Communion to Kerry and other U.S. politicians would be made by the U.S. Catholic bishops," and not by the leadership of the church in Rome.

Christopher Coyne, a spokesman for Archbishop Sean O'Malley of Boston, Kerry's hometown, said a ban was unlikely, reported the *Post*. "When people come forward to receive communion, we give them communion," he said.

Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis said in January that he would deny communion to Kerry.

Speaking April 23 to pro-Democrat organizers of the March for Women's Lives, Kerry—who presents himself as better qualified to lead the so-called war on terror than President George Bush—identified women's

rights with a "stronger America.... We are going to have a change in leadership in this country to protect the right of choice," he said. The 20-year senator said that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare."

The presidential candidate did not appear at the march, which drew around a million people. Sizable contingents of Catholics for Free Choice participated in the action.

The day after the march, Ben Widdicombe reported in the April 26 New York *Daily News* that Kerry's stance might jeopardize his invitation to a campaign event for the bourgeois presidential candidates.

"Will Edward Cardinal Egan try to block Sen. John Kerry from the 59th Alfred E. Smith Dinner?" wrote Widdicombe in his column about goings-on in New York. The October dinner—a yearly gathering of capitalist politicians, businessmen, and celebrities—is sponsored by the Archdiocese of New York, headed by Egan.

"Egan may take a hard-line against the Democratic candidate because he supports abortion rights," said Widdicombe.

Writing in the April 28 *USA Today*, Thomas Cox, the publisher of the *National Catholic Reporter*, was outraged that bishops might "intentionally try to harm the candidacy of a Catholic Democrat." If elected, Cox said, Kerry would be the first Catholic president since Kennedy—a span of 44 years.

### Rearguard action by prelates

Behind the acrimonious controversy is a rearguard attempt by right-wing church leaders to reverse the growing support for abortion rights among Catholics and within broader society. Opinion polls charting the steady decline in opposition to a woman's right to choose register no difference between Catholics and non-Catholics.

In a document prepared for the Bipartisan ProChoice caucus, Catholics for Free Choice (CFC) say that a Belden Russonello and Steward survey conducted in October 2000 shows that "two-thirds of Catholics say it should be legal for a woman to have an abortion" while "fifty-eight percent of Catholics describe themselves as pro-choice." Furthermore, "less than one-fourth of U.S. Catholics agree with the bishops' position that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances."

In addition, stated the document, "Catholic women in the United States are as likely as women in the general population to have an abortion," and "a majority of Catholic women (52 percent)...prefer a hospital in their community that offers elective abortions to one that does not."

The CFC also noted that "on birth control as on abortion, Catholics follow their consciences."

Dozens of members of the U.S. Congress who identify themselves as Catholic take a pro-choice stance. At the same time, pro-choice politicians of both parties have joined the bipartisan offensive to restrict access to abortion, starting with the 1977 Hyde amendment, which cut off Medicaid funding for the operation. Democratic president James Carter signed that amendment into law.

## Nader seeks Reform Party's aid to get on ballot

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In his effort to secure ballot status in this year's presidential election, Ralph Nader has been working to persuade leaders of both the Reform and Green parties to list him as their candidate in a number of states. Nader is a liberal political figure who was the Green Party's presidential candidate in the 2000 elections.

The *Hartford Courant* reported April 3 that Nader, who is running as an independent, had "met and exchanged letters with third-party officials to negotiate what he says is a pragmatic strategy that would help him gain access to all 50 ballots." Where Nader's supporters are unable to get him on state ballots, wrote reporter Janice D'Arcy, Nader will try a variety of tactics. In some states he will identify himself as the candidate of his newly formed Populist Party, while in others he will gain the endorsement of third parties. "I would still be an independent candidate, I would just appear on their ballot lines," he said.

Nader has emphasized that he will accept the two parties' nomination on a state-by-state basis only. The Green Party has ballot status in 23 states and the Reform Party in seven.

Reform Party chairman Shawn O'Hara told the April 18 *Los Angeles Times* that the party would probably name Nader as their candidate in several states. "We have a terrific bond with Ralph," he said. O'Hara said Reform leaders and Nader had explored common ground on "non-social" issues.

The Reform Party was founded in 1992 as a vehicle for the presidential ambitions of Ross Perot, a rightist billionaire businessman. Presenting himself as a strong man and uncorrupted candidate who would confront

the "elite," Perot called for massive cuts to social spending and made a particular appeal to Special Forces in the military.

Eight years later, ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan pushed Perot's supporters aside and carried out a takeover of the party for his 2000 presidential election bid. Following his setback in that election campaign, the ultrarightist pulled away from the party again.

Nader said that he is proposing nothing more than a tactical alliance with the Reform Party. "We're talking two or three states," he said in early April. "It's no compromise of any principles."

Last February, Nader paid tribute to Perot's "undeniable patriotism," asking him to speak out in opposition to the ballooning federal budget deficit. "Ross Perot is exceptionally credible on federal deficits," he said. The businessman had "made the issue a core of his campaign in 1992," he added, avoiding mention of Perot's proposals to slash social welfare entitlements.

Nader has also met with leaders of the Green Party, which nominated him as its candidate in the last two presidential races. The *Courant* noted the potential clash between Reform and the Greens over immigration policy and other issues. "We are sick and tired of this country being flooded by immigrants," O'Hara of the Reform Party told the paper. The Green Party's platform states, "We must accept the contributions and rights of our immigrants."

The paper reported that Nader has stayed away from such potential conflicts, saying that he agrees with "most points on both platforms." Nader's own platform focuses heavily on the so-called independent character of his campaign and contains many

# California truckers protest high fuel prices

BY BETSEY STONE

LOS ANGELES—"On Friday you got a taste of the power of the truckers," said Noël Díaz, referring to the April 30 protest against skyrocketing gas prices by port truck drivers in Los Angeles.

Díaz, a driver for 16 years, was one of thousands of truckers who parked their rigs and refused to work that day. The protest reduced business by 85 percent at the port of Long Beach, one of the country's busiest container ports, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Some truckers blocked traffic on major freeways leading to the ports with big rigs carrying signs protesting the spike in the price of diesel fuel which has jumped 36 cents in two past two weeks, to as high as \$2.50 per gallon—56 cents a gallon higher than the national average. Over 500 rallied in Banning Park near the entrance to the Port of Los Angeles.

The 10,000 short-haul drivers who carry cargo between the ports and railroads and area warehouses are among the lowest paid truck drivers in the country. With the rise in gas prices they are being squeezed as never before.

Díaz, like other truckers who participated, said the protests will continue.

Record-high diesel costs have spurred trucker demonstrations in Northern and Central California as well. The protests began at two rail yards near Stockton on April 26, which reduced intermodal truck rail traffic by 95 percent, then spread to Oakland and Southern California.

An attempt by Jerry Bridges, the Oakland Port director, to end a walkout by port drivers there fell apart May 6 when the port agency's offer fell short of trucker demands. "They thought they would give us a little

candy but we will not leave until we get what we want," said Ruben López, one of three drivers who negotiated with the port bosses.

Oakland truckers are demanding a 30 percent increase in fees for hauling containers.

Most of the drivers are described in the big-business press as "independent truckers" or "independent contractors." In reality they are owner-operators who face similar conditions of exploitation as wage workers. They own their trucks and pay the costs of fuel, upkeep of equipment, insurance, road taxes and other fees, and expenses of the job. They work at set rates per trip, which haven't gone up in more than a decade, and receive no pension or medical benefits.

Drivers talked with *Militant* reporters at a lunch truck near the berths and giant cranes that spread out for miles at the Los Angeles port. Raul Agamenon went to his truck and brought back bills and receipts showing pay of approximately \$780 per week, with diesel fuel costing \$400, insurance \$150, plus costs of truck maintenance, tires, road fees, and other expenses.

Agamenon said that drivers are often forced to use unsafe chassis. The cost of any damage to goods is borne by the driver. The truckers are sometimes asked to clean toxic substances and other hazardous materials from their trucks without training or proper safety equipment.

Juan José García, another trucker, pointed out that the rates paid by the companies have not gone up in the four years he has worked as a driver, while costs continue to climb. He said those who still have to make payments on their trucks are particularly hard hit.

Truckers usually work a 60-hour week, with long hours of unpaid labor spent wait-



Independent truckers rally April 30 in Wilmington, California, against rising fuel costs.

ing in lines to complete paper work and to pick up cargo. This often cuts the number of runs truckers can make by half.

Rosa Sánchez, who operates the lunch truck, closed down on April 30 and attended the truckers' rally. "I support them 100 percent," she said. She pointed out that police harassment of truckers is constant in the harbor area and has intensified since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Police have said they will impound trucks and arrest any trucker disrupting the movement of freight. Three drivers were arrested after parking their big rigs April 30 on the I-5 freeway.

Representatives of the Teamsters Port District are passing out flyers with the headline "Owner Operators Get the Shaft, Enough is Enough, Join Us, Fight for Justice," calling for the companies to pay a fuel surcharge on each container that passes through the port, with the money passed on to the drivers.

The shipping companies say that the truckers do not have a right to organize into a union because as "independent contractors," they are prohibited from doing so by anti-trust laws.

"This is nothing but a trick," says driver Noël Díaz. "They give us this title of 'independents,' but we work for the shipping and truck companies—they dictate the rates, they cancel our jobs if we are not there when they want—is this being independent?"

Like many truckers, Díaz hopes the current protests will help pave the way for a fight to unionize the drivers, with higher pay, benefits, and better working conditions. (See article on page 7 on how the Teamsters organized independent truckers in the 1930s.)

Some of the truckers who spearheaded the April 30 action have been part of earlier protests and attempts to unionize port drivers.

In response to the rise in diesel prices, truckers began a two-day boycott at cargo ports in Norfolk, Virginia, May 6. These drivers are demanding a fuel surcharge to compensate for the rise in prices.

At the same time, U.S. refineries are reporting record profits as they cash in on the sky-high pump prices. ChevronTexaco, Shell, ConocoPhillips, Tesoro, and Exxon Mobil—California's largest refiners—have all reported big profits the first quarter of this year. ChevronTexaco, the second largest U.S. oil company, said its quarterly profit rose 33 percent to \$2.56 billion.

## Co-Op miners speak at UMWA locals in West

Continued from front page

and answered questions from Local 1984 members. The Deserado miners said their contract with Blue Mountain Energy expires in July. After thanking the local for its support, the Co-Op miners offered their help if the Deserado miners go on strike. Local 1984 members passed around the hat and made donations to help the strikers with gas money.

Closer to Huntington, in the town of East Carbon, UMWA Local 9958, which is made up of retirees, has led by example in supporting the Co-Op strike. This local has mobilized its members to set up food drops in front of local stores and help staff the picket line at the Co-Op mine entrance. Retirees from this local were also part of the delegation that met with Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Land Management officials in Price, Utah, last month to help the Co-Op miners retain their right to continue picketing with a picket trailer and shack.

Two Co-Op strikers updated Local 9958 members at their May 3 meeting about their struggle.

"We thanked them for everything they have done for us," said Gonzalo Salazar, a leader of the Co-Op strike, in an interview. "They said they are very proud of what we are doing by standing up to the Kingstons and said we can keep counting on their support." The local told the strikers they would organize to put boxes in front of local stores to collect food and financial donations.

The Kingston clan is a multimillionaire family in Utah that own businesses across six western states, including the Co-Op mine. In addition to the super-exploitation of the Co-Op miners, the Kingstons are infamous for being a polygamous clan with several of its prominent members convicted for physical abuse of young female members of the family who tried to escape forced marriages with relatives.

The 75 Co-Op miners were fired to a person on Sept. 22, 2003, for protesting the suspension of a co-worker and unsafe conditions on the job. The miners had been having meetings with the UMWA to get themselves organized into a real union, unlike a company "union" the bosses had set up to prevent the workers from being organized. These underground coal miners were being paid between \$5.15 and \$7.00 an hour with no benefits, while the aver-

age wage in the industry for such jobs is \$15 per hour.

On May 5, three other Co-Op strikers spoke before UMWA Local 9959, which represents workers at the local landfill in East Carbon. The first time the strikers addressed these unionists in October 2003, the small local donated \$1,000. Strikers Domingo Olivas, Juan Salazar, and Bill Estrada told the local how strong the strike is after more than seven months and how their support is still needed.

"We described for them the growing support we have around the country," said Bill Estrada. "We also gave them copies of newspaper articles covering recent activities that we have organized." Estrada said that after asking several questions on the strike, the local decided to help the strikers by organizing a cookout at the picket line and invite other miners and people in the surrounding communities to raise funds for the strike.

A day earlier, on May 4, Bishop

George Niederauer, the head of the Salt Lake Catholic Diocese, visited the Co-Op picket line. The San Rafael Mission Catholic Church in Huntington and the Salt Lake Diocese have backed the strike from the beginning. Members of the Catholic Church throughout Utah have donated to a fund that is used to help pay the utility bills and rents of the strikers.

"I drove two hours to come here and two hours back," Niederauer told 25 strikers and their families. "But you sacrifice day after day." The Catholic Church backs the strike, he said, and will work even harder to support the miners. That evening the bishop spoke to 100 people who attended a Mass and dinner at the San Rafael Mission Catholic Church held to support the Co-Op strikers.

Contributions to the striking miners can be sent to: UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, Utah 84501. Checks should be earmarked "Co-Op Miners Fund."

## U.S. prison construction booms, abuse rampant

Continued from front page

Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., show that during this time physical abuse and degradation of inmates by prison guards has been widespread. In addition to beatings, this has included routine stripping of prisoners in front of other inmates before moving them to another prison and forcing newly arrived inmates to wear black hoods.

In the states with the largest prison increases, the *New Landscape of Imprisonment* study reveals that one-third of all counties have at least one prison—an increase from 13 percent in 1979. Across the nation, the number of state prisons alone grew from 592 in 1979 to 1,023 in the year 2000.

Florida tops the list with a state or federal prison in more than three-quarters of all counties. Next were California and New York, with 59 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

Texas led the way nationwide in building new jails. In 2000 the state had 137 prisons, seven times the 1979 figure and 50 percent more than Florida and California, the next highest.

While the majority of new prisons built over the period studied were in metropolitan

areas, the four-fold increase in the prison population as a whole has meant that in some rural counties, prisoners now make up a significant proportion of the overall population. Each of the 10 states has at least five counties where prisoners make up 5 percent or more of the total residents. In Concho County, Texas, prisoners make up 33 percent of the population of 4,000. While 5 percent of the population in the 10 states lives in rural areas, 23 percent of the prison population is locked up there.

The government includes the number of prisoners in the census for determining the total population of an area and its number of elected representatives—even though prisoners are stripped of their voting rights.

The report also notes that inmates are more and more frequently forced to serve their sentences far from their home counties. In Georgia, Ohio, Texas, Florida, and California only four out of a total of 626 counties had a high proportion of prisoners from the local area.

### Systematic abuse

According to the Sentencing Project, during the 25-year prison boom 40 state prison systems were under some form of

court order for brutality, overcrowding, poor food, or lack of medical care.

Methods of torture and human degradations like those recently revealed in Iraq (see front-page article) have been rampant in U.S. jails, according to a May 8 report by Reuters and another one the same day in the *New York Times*. Both cite corrections officials, inmates, and human rights advocates as their sources.

While the articles cite poor training and difficulty hiring prison guards to keep pace with the expanding prison population as reasons for the brutal conditions, the sheer scope of the evidence cited shows that abuse and degradation of workers and farmers behind bars is an integral part the capitalist "justice" system at home and abroad.

Some of the other examples cited in the articles include:

- Male inmates at the Maricopa County Jail in Phoenix, Arizona, the *Times* reports, "are forced to wear women's pink underwear as a form of humiliation."

- Newly arriving inmates at Virginia's Wallens Ridge maximum security prison are forced to wear black hoods and are often beaten and made to crawl on their knees to

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# ‘Militant’ sub goal a hair’s breadth away; let’s make ‘Perspectiva Mundial’ goal too

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In the final stretch of an eight-week campaign that ends May 17, supporters of the *Militant* are gearing up to exceed their goal of doubling the size of the readership of the socialist newsweekly.

“A workmate signed up to subscribe to the *Militant* last week,” reported Ron Poulson, a socialist worker in the packing room of a ham and salami plant in Sydney, Australia. “A discussion we had on women’s rights clinched it for him. He took a look at the coverage of the massive demonstration defending abortion rights in Washington, D.C., and said, ‘I thought women in America and Australia had already won all their rights.’ He’s from Tamil Nadu in southern India, and was quite interested to read the coverage of this political development in the United States.

“He told me he would take some time to read the coverage on the moves by Tel Aviv against the Palestinian struggle,” Poulson added. “He wants to discuss this more.”

Supporters of the *Militant* in Australia have sold eight subs to meat packers and members of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union, close to their goal of 10.

Efforts like these have brought the spring subscription campaign within inches of victory on the *Militant* goal in the final week. As of week seven, 1,876 subscriptions

have been sold, only 124 shy of the international target.

Special efforts are needed to close the gap on the goal of selling 600 subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial*, the *Militant*’s Spanish-language sister magazine—166 more subscriptions are needed to hit the mark. Socialist workers in U.S. packinghouses who have already sold nearly 120 *PM* subscriptions can made a difference here, as can socialists in the garment and textile industry.

Joanne Kuniansky, who works in a packinghouse in Sydney, reports that some of the new subscribers have gotten involved with the socialist movement there. “Anna, a workmate of mine, helped out during the Communist League election campaign at the end of March. She signed up to subscribe and has since joined us at the May Day march in Wollongong and protest actions against police brutality.”

Another co-worker of Kuniansky’s who got his first subscription during the drive, Sasha, has helped set up a new computer in the Communist League hall in Sydney.

In New Zealand, *Militant* supporters from around the country participated in the 20,000-strong march on May 5 in Wellington to defend the land rights of the Maori people (see back-page article).

“We set up a literature table on the parliament grounds at the end of the march,” said Terry Coggan. “In spite of driving wind and rain, we sold four subscriptions and 50 single copies of the *Militant*, before the weather forced us to shut down the table.”

“We set up a table at Victoria University in Wellington the next day, and sold another five subscriptions along with several books,” Coggan said.

Supporters of the paper in the Twin Cities need just one sub to meet their goal.

“We had a steady flow of people coming up to our table all day at the Cinco de Mayo celebration here in St. Paul,” wrote Bob Sorenson from St. Paul, in a note accompanying 10 *Militant* subscriptions. “This year we



Militant / Mike Tucker  
***Militant* sales table at April 29 march of 5,000 through Hamilton, New Zealand, against government attacks on indigenous Maori land rights.**

paid for a booth and we had a wonderful location between the U.S. Army and the George Bush booth. We had a big sign, in English and Spanish, ‘U.S. Out of Iraq!’ Seven people signed up to subscribe to the *Militant* and two to *Perspectiva Mundial*.”

At Garden Manor Farms, a packinghouse in the Hunts Point meat market in the Bronx, three workers who helped bring in the union at that plant in a victorious May 4 certification election have signed up to subscribe. The third subscription there was clinched when a worker who subscribes to the paper highlighted the *Militant*’s coverage of other labor struggles.

“I was showing the paper to one of the workers when a recent subscriber in the plant came up to us,” reported Samantha Kolhoff, a meat packer at another Hunts Point plant. “When I mentioned the union victory at Point Blank Body Armor in Florida, the subscriber said he had read the article already. ‘The boss called the workers snakes,’ he said, ‘but in fact it was the bosses who were the snakes.’ So the other worker decided he would subscribe as well.”

## ‘Militant’ fund: one more week, \$32,000 to go

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

“At the May 8 public meeting to win contributions to the *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* fund in the Twin Cities, there was a lot of discussion about U.S. imperialism’s humiliation and torture of prisoners in Iraq, and the worldwide outrage it has sparked,” said Tom Fiske in a May 10 note from St. Paul, Minnesota.

The event celebrated the 70th anniversary of the 1934 strikes by workers in the trucking industry that helped pave the way for the union battles that forged the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Lisa Rottach, a member of the Socialist Workers Party from Omaha, Nebraska, “gave a talk tying the labor rebellions of yesterday and today with the prospects for a working-class revolution in the United States,” Fiske wrote.

“*Militant* supporters contributed \$1,650 at the meeting, and pledged a further \$450,” he said. Twin Cities campaigners have talked to all those who have pledged during the eight-week drive, winning commitments to collect the \$1,000-plus remaining and send it to the *Militant*.

This kind of effort and one-on-one follow-up is needed everywhere. With one week to go, \$32,000 remains to be collected to get in all the pledges. Local quotas amount to \$93,000. Getting this in by the May 17 deadline, as local supporters are driving to do, would take the fund well over the international goal of \$85,000.

The \$20,000 sent in last week by supporters in the United States was an improvement over previous weeks. It bodes well for a concerted effort to bring in the rest the last week of the drive.

From Tampa, Florida, which tops the chart in the United States, fund organizer Cheryl Goertz reported May 11 that the collection there now exceeds \$1,425. The money is on the way, she said. Far from resting on their laurels, she added, “supporters are planning to contact *Militant* readers who said they want to donate but haven’t done so yet.”

Like their Twin Cities counterparts, campaigners in Birmingham and Pittsburgh organized successful fund meetings over the May 9–10 weekend.

Chris Remple reported that 19 people attended the event in Pittsburgh to hear Romina Green, an SWP National Committee member in Cleveland, speak on “Cuba and the Coming American Revolution.” Remple said, that “almost \$900 was contributed at the meeting.”

All checks received by midday Tuesday, May 18, will count toward the final tally, which will be published in next week’s *Militant*. To make a contribution, send a check or money order payable to “The Militant,” and mail it to 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Spring Subscription Drive March 20–May 17: Week 7 of 8					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
CANADA					
Toronto	50	58	116%	7	15
Montreal	35	30	86%	15	12
CANADA total	85	88	104%	22	27
AUSTRALIA	45	44	98%	7	4
NEW ZEALAND					
Christchurch	26	27	104%	1	0
Auckland	32	29	91%	1	0
N.Z. total	58	56	97%	2	0
UNITED STATES					
Birmingham	30	34	113%	8	4
Pittsburgh	50	51	102%	3	2
Atlanta	55	55	100%	20	11
Des Moines	50	50	100%	25	22
Newark	125	125	100%	35	26
New York	200	198	99%	60	47
Washington	85	84	99%	20	19
Twin Cities	75	74	99%	35	21
Houston	65	64	98%	15	14
Omaha	70	68	97%	40	41
Los Angeles	135	130	96%	50	43
Philadelphia	70	67	96%	10	4
Chicago	100	95	95%	35	34
Utah	40	38	95%	15	16
Tampa	30	28	93%	10	6
Boston	85	77	91%	50	24
Miami	95	85	89%	18	10
NE Pennsylvania	45	40	89%	10	7
Cleveland	30	26	87%	8	5
Western Col.	30	25	83%	15	8
San Francisco	120	98	82%	40	23
Detroit	50	37	74%	8	3
Seattle	60	36	60%	10	3
U.S. total	1695	1585	93%	540	393
UNITED KINGDOM					
Edinburgh	20	20	100%	0	0
London	50	40	80%	10	3
UK total	70	60	86%	10	3
SWEDEN					
Gothenburg	22	20	91%	4	3
Stockholm	15	11	73%	6	4
SWEDEN Total	37	31	84%	10	7
ICELAND	18	12	67%	1	0
Int'l totals	2003	1876	94%	588	434
Goal/Should be	2000	1750	88%	600	525
IN THE UNIONS					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	10	8	80%		
UNITED STATES					
UFCW	110	88	80%	123	118
UMWA	50	34	68%	12	9
UNITE	50	26	52%	40	30
Total	210	148	70%	175	157
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	1	50%	1	0
CANADA					
UFCW	13	5	38%	5	2
UNITE	9	0	0%	5	4
Total	22	5	23%	10	6
NEW ZEALAND					
NDU	2	0	0%	1	0
MWU	2	0	0%		
Total	4	0	0%	1	0
*raised goal					

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.

\$85,000 Militant/PM Fund March 20—May 17: Week 7 of 8			
	Goal	Paid	%
SWEDEN	500	650	130%
AUSTRALIA	1,500	1,715	114%
NEW ZEALAND	1,600	1,071	67%
UNITED STATES			
Los Angeles	8,000	7,250	91%
Miami	1,700	1,469	86%
Tampa	1,300	1,090	84%
Newark	3,500	2,867	82%
Northeast	1,600	1,300	81%
Seattle	6,000	4,790	80%
Utah	1,500	1,170	78%
Washington D.C.	2,800	2,171	78%
Cleveland	1,200	920	77%
New York	11,000	8,080	73%
Houston	3,500	2,540	73%
Pittsburgh	3,800	2,582	68%
Boston	3,000	1,920	64%
Omaha	440	280	64%
Birmingham	2,000	1,265	63%
Des Moines	1,100	639	58%
Philadelphia	3,300	1,864	56%
Atlanta	5,000	2,755	55%
Detroit	3,000	1,595	53%
San Francisco	8,500	4,465	53%
Twin Cities	4,000	1,855	46%
Chicago	5,000	1,970	39%
Western Col.	2,000	300	15%
U.S. Total	83,240	55,137	66%
ICELAND	200	130	65%
UK	1,000	492	49%
CANADA	5,000	1,253	25%
FRANCE	300	0	0%
Other		1,110	
Int'l Total	93,340	61,558	72%
Goal/Should be	85,000	74,375	88%



# Mirror of U.S. prisons

**Continued from front page**

in Iraq.... The war on terror has been made much more complicated and difficult because of this torture scandal.”

Speaking to graduates of Southern University in New Orleans May 8, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said the abuses of Iraqi prisoners “hurt us in our objectives in Iraq” and have done “damage to our country.”

The Bush administration said that Rumsfeld would remain on the job. The U.S. secretary of defense told the media he will not resign because he remains effective in pursuing Washington’s interests worldwide. After a May 10 meeting at the Pentagon with his war council, Bush vigorously defended Rumsfeld’s record. “You are courageously leading our nation in the war against terror,” the president told Rumsfeld in an appearance in front of the media with several top officials from his cabinet, including Powell and vice-president Richard Cheney. “You are doing a superb job. You are a strong secretary of defense, and our nation owes you a debt of gratitude.”

## Extent of humiliation

Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba testified May 11 before the Senate Armed Services Committee about the exploding Iraqi prison scandal. Taguba, who had been assigned by the military to investigate the abuses of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison, the center of degrading treatment of inmates by their U.S. captors, had issued a report in March.

“Between October and December 2003, at the Abu Ghraib Confinement Facility,” Taguba’s report says, “numerous sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees. This systematic and illegal abuse of detainees was intentionally perpetrated by several members of the military police guard force.”

According to the report, the practices included:

“Punching, slapping and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet;

“Videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees;

“Forcibly arranging detainees in various explicit positions for photographing;

“Forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time;

“Forcing naked male detainees to wear women’s underwear;

“Forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped;

“Arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them;

“Positioning a naked detainee on a MRE Box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture;

“Writing ‘I am a Rapist’ (sic) on the leg of a detainee alleged to have forcibly raped a 15-year old fellow detainee, and then photographing him naked;

“Placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee’s neck and having a female Soldier pose for a picture;

“A male MP guard having sex with a female detainee.” Taguba did not call this by its proper name, rape.

“Using military working dogs (without muzzles) to intimidate and frighten detainees, and in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee,” the report continued.

“Taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees.”

The report adds that the humiliating treatment included breaking chemical lights and pouring phosphoric liquid on prisoners, threatening male inmates with rape, and sodomizing a prisoner with a chemical light and a broom stick.

According to the Taguba report, Sgt. Javal Davis, a member of the 372<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company at Abu Ghraib said that military intelligence officers insinuated to the guards that they needed to abuse the inmates. “Loosen this guy up for us,” was a common comment, or “Make sure he gets the treatment.”

Sgt. Mike Sindar from the 870<sup>th</sup> MP Company that served in Abu Ghraib told Reuters, “It was a common thing to abuse

prisoners.” Sindar described how an officer in his unit held a prisoner down while others beat him. He said he saw prisoners with racial taunts written on their hoods such as “camel jockey” and “I tried to kill an American but now I’m in jail.”

Sindar said the faces in the widely circulated photos are only a few of those abusing prisoners. “Beatings happen, yes, all the time,” he said. Sindar was referring to the decision by the military brass to bring criminal charges against six soldiers. Seven officers have received slaps on the wrist, so far, in the form of reprimands.

## Abuse included killings

On May 4, Maj. Gen. Donald Ryder, head of the U.S. Army’s Criminal Investigation Division, acknowledged that of the 35 criminal investigations underway for mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan by the U.S. military, 25 have involved deaths.

Rumsfeld and other top ranking Pentagon officials have tried to place the blame for the scandal on a small number of non-commissioned officers. But evidence has emerged that the Pentagon high command had reports at its disposal of torture of Iraqi prisoners as long as a year ago that it either ignored or tried to keep secret.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) released a report—first disclosed by the *Wall Street Journal* May 7—on the “Treatment by the Coalition Forces (CF) of Prisoners of War and Other Protected Persons in Iraq.” The report, dated February 2004, says that the evidence collected by the ICRC on abuse of inmates in Abu Ghraib, Umm Qasr, and Camp Bucca prisons “suggested that the use of ill-treatment against persons deprived of their liberty went beyond exceptional cases and might be considered as a practice tolerated by the CF.”

The abuse is not unique to the U.S. military. Umm Qasr is a port town in southern Iraq where British occupation forces run the prison camp. The London-based *Guardian* reported May 7 that a British soldier known only as “Soldier C,” who is a member of the Territorial Army attached to the Queen’s Lancashire Regiment, is now being questioned by UK military police about torture of inmates. The British *Daily Mirror* has published photos of that unit showing British soldiers beating and urinating on Iraqi prisoners. Soldier C has reportedly said that in one instance a corporal placed a sandbag over a prisoner’s head and then poked his fingers into the inmate’s eyes. According to the *Guardian*, up to 100 British troops in that unit were involved in assaults on Iraqi prisoners.

The ICRC report charges occupation forces with “serious violations” of the Geneva Conventions governing treatment of prisoners of war. These violations date back to before the U.S.-led war to occupy Iraq ended a year ago, the Red Cross report says. The ICRC—which is mandated by international treaties to visit prisoners of war—had often filed official complaints with occupation authorities about the humiliating treatment that in some cases resulted in deaths of prisoners, including one last October about the abuses at Abu Ghraib. These complaints were not made public until now.

The findings of this report contrast sharply with statements by Rumsfeld and other high military officials that they first became aware of problems in U.S.-run prisons in Iraq when a soldier came forward with photographs depicting graphic abuse in January of this year.

According to *USA Today*, Air Force Gen. Richard Myers personally pressed CBS to delay the broadcast of the damning photos for two weeks in April. The photos were first aired by CBS’s *60 Minutes II* program the evening of April 28. Even after Rumsfeld and his senior aides acknowledged receiving the reports of the abusive practices in January, they testified that they did not ask to see the photographs because “they didn’t want to interfere in an ongoing investigation.”

## How interrogation policies were set

Evidence is also emerging that the military high command was responsible



**Member of 372nd Military Police Company at Abu Ghraib prison holds an Iraqi prisoner by a leash. Many of these guards got training in U.S. jails.**

for setting policies on interrogation of prisoners that were at the root of the systematic abuse.

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller arrived in Iraq last August from Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where he was warden of Camp Delta. Washington still has some 600 men jailed there, holding them indefinitely without charges. Reports have abounded of systematic violence and humiliation of those prisoners. Miller went to Iraq as the head of a team “experienced in strategic interrogation.”

“He came up there and told me he was going to ‘Gitmoize’ the detention operation,” said Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who was in charge of the Abu Ghraib prison, referring to Miller. Most of Miller’s recommendations were implemented, including that prison guards should be subordinate to military and CIA interrogators and should handle prisoners in a way that “sets the conditions for (their) successful interrogation.”

“We’re enormously proud of what we have done at Guantánamo to be able to set that kind of environment where we were focused on getting the maximum amount of intelligence,” Miller said, after he returned to Iraq at the beginning of May having been named to supervise the U.S.-run military prison system there.

The practices authorized by the Pentagon at Camp Delta can be described as “Torture Lite,” according to a recent report in the *Taipei Times*. “We wanted to find a legal way to jack up the pressure,” one lawyer and drafter of the guidelines told the newspaper. Authorized tactics included sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures, and psychological torture.

The Pentagon rationalized the use of these practices as “militarily necessary” in order “to extract information from suspects about possible impending attacks.”

## MPs trained as U.S. prison guards

Methods of torture and human degradation like those used at the Abu Ghraib prison by U.S. military police, CIA agents, and civilian contractors (or mercenaries), have long been a feature of U.S. prisons (see front-page article on U.S. prison construction boom).

Two of the military cops implicated in the torture scandal at Abu Ghraib, Charles Graner and Ivan Frederick, were former civilian prison guards in U.S. prisons.

“In Pennsylvania and some other states,” an article in the May 8 *New York Times* said, “inmates are routinely stripped in front of other inmates before being moved to a new prison or a new unit within their prison.”

Graner, who appears in one of the photos from Abu Ghraib smiling behind naked Iraqi prisoners forced to lie shackled in a heap, was a guard at Greene County State Correctional Institution, one of Pennsylvania’s top security death row prisons. Two years after Graner arrived there, Greene County was at the center of an abuse scandal in which it was revealed that guards routinely beat and humiliated prisoners.

Lane McCotter, who was assigned by the Justice Department to oversee the reopening under U.S. management of the Abu Ghraib prison has a long record as a brutal jailer in the U.S. McCotter resigned under pres-

sure as the director of the Utah Department of Corrections in 1997, the *Times* reports, “after a mentally ill inmate died while shackled to a restraining chair for 16 hours. The inmate, who suffered from schizophrenia, was kept naked the whole time.”

This didn’t negatively affect McCotter’s career. He went on to become an executive in the booming business of private imprisonment. During his tenure as the director of Utah-based Management & Training Corp.—which claims to be the nation’s third-largest private prison company—McCotter’s private jail in Santa Fe was criticized by the Department of Justice and the New Mexico Department of Corrections for unsafe conditions and lack of medical care for inmates.

## Abuse a feature of all imperialist wars

While Democratic Party politicians have focused their fire on the Bush administration, and particularly Rumsfeld, around this scandal, they never mention the fact that their party ran the White House during most of the wars over the last half century when reports abounded about similar, or worse, treatment of prisoners of war (POW) by the U.S. military.

Harry Truman, for example, was president during most of the 1950–53 Korean War, when U.S. military officers treated Chinese and Korean POWs as “Oriental cattle who were to be given quite different treatment to a European,” according to a report by a British officer Maj. Dawney Bancroft who was part of the imperialist troops on the scene. On “many occasions,” Bancroft added, “I witnessed U.S. troops openly violating the Geneva Conventions.”

John F. Kennedy and his successor Lyndon Johnson, both Democrats, were presidents during most of the Vietnam War. During that period, the U.S. military built and maintained the infamous “tiger cages” at the Con Son Island Prison. These were deep, dank concrete pits, each holding three to five prisoners. Steel gates covered the top of each one. Prisoners were shackled to the floor of these pits and their guards often beat them mercilessly. Above each cage was a bucket of lime. Wardens would throw down clouds of it onto the chained prisoners as a form of “sanitary torture.” After months of internment, prisoners would often lose use of their legs, develop tuberculosis, or gangrenous feet.

Imperialist governments that have been critical of the conduct of the Bush administration in Iraq—with Paris at the center—each have their own records of brutality and abuse against prisoners during their wars of conquest. The French military, for example, was notorious for such practices in Algeria, a former French colony.

One recent such example was an account by Paul Aussaresses, a French general who detailed in a book how he personally took part in the torture and killing of 24 Algerian prisoners during Algeria’s war of independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. French authorities charged the general in 2001, who was 83 at the time, for acting as “an apologist for war crimes,” because he wrote the book, but he was not accused or punished for the actual crime.



# Organizing independent truckers in 1930s

The following excerpt is from the appendix to *Teamster Politics* by Farrell Dobbs, entitled "How the Teamsters Union organized independent truckers in the 1930s." In it, Dobbs describes how the class-struggle leadership of the Minnesota Teamsters worked to win owner-operators to the labor movement, and in the process differentiate them from fleet owners and other exploiting layers in the trucking industry. The article was first published in the *Militant* in response to the February 1974 strike by owner-operators in the United States. *Teamster Politics* is the third of a four-volume series by Dobbs, a leader of the Minnesota Teamsters during the 1934 strikes, the campaign to organize over-the-road drivers, and other Teamster-led battles in the Midwest throughout the 1930s. Dobbs was also a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Subheadings are by the *Militant*. Copyright © 1975 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



## BY FARRELL DOBBS

During the depression of the 1930s individually owned trucks appeared in the transportation industry in ever-increasing numbers. A major factor in this development was an intensive sales campaign by the auto corporations. Their caper was to induce the unemployed to buy themselves a job by buying a truck. Workers who could scrape up the down payment were allowed to meet the balance of the purchase price on a long-term installment basis. Incentive for such purchases was given by the federal government, which used individually owned trucks on its "make work" projects for the unemployed of that period. State, county, and city engineering departments followed suit, especially in connection with road work.

Comparable trends developed within private industry. Firms having their own fleets of trucks often kept a surplus of rigs on hand by hiring independent owner-operators, who usually found themselves payless—despite the time put in—when they were not actually hauling something. Fluctuations in business volume were thus compensated for at the expense of the owner-operators and to the profit of the fleet owners. Broker setups appeared in the form of companies that relied entirely on individual truck owners to move goods. In such cases virtually the entire overhead cost of trucking operations was shoved on to the owner-operators, thereby impairing their capacity to earn a living. These and other practices of a comparable nature held sway in coal and ice delivery, construction hauling, motor freight, and elsewhere in transportation.

Immediate profit-taking along these lines was not the only object the capitalists had in mind. Advantage was sought from ambitions that developed among independent owner-operators to expand their holdings and go into business for themselves. Illusions were fostered that such prospects were open to all individual owners, so as to trick them into identifying themselves with the problems of management. To the extent that the scheme worked, divisions were sown between owner-operators and the drivers of company fleets. Unionization of the industry was thereby impeded; the laws of the open-shop jungle could better prevail; and the trucking bosses were able to wax fatter in all respects.

These dangers to both categories of drivers were further accentuated by misleadership within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Little attention, if any, was paid to the problems of the owner-operators. Although sporadic efforts were made to organize fleet drivers, IBT policy was so ill-conceived and so poorly executed that not much headway could be made in that sphere either. As a result, the union remained weak, at best, and in several important respects it was quite impotent.

## Class-struggle policy

Such were the prevailing conditions throughout the trucking industry when Trotskyists in Minneapolis began to win leadership influence within the IBT during the second half of the 1930s. In shaping

our overall class-struggle policy, close attention to the independent owner-operator question was included. We began by taking full account of the realities of the existing situation. Drivers owning their own trucks had become a factor of major dimensions within the industry. To consolidate the union power, they had to be brought into an alliance with the fleet drivers. Before that could be done, however, a course had to be developed that would serve the owner-operators' interests.

Careful examination of all the factors involved convinced us that those owning



Militant/Greg Cornell

**Independent truckers in Minnesota vote Feb. 10, 1974, to continue in national strike. Demanding pay raises and the rollback of fuel prices, the truckers' strike reached more than 20 states.**

one truck, who did their own driving, should be approached by the union as fellow workers. Proceeding accordingly, we set out to organize as many of these individuals as possible. They were then extended the democratic right to shape the demands that were made upon their employers, the leasing companies. On that basis the union as a whole followed through by backing them in struggles to improve their take-home pay.

The validity of that policy was confirmed by its results. In the major struggles of that period against the trucking employers generally, the union's owner-operator members served loyally. They volunteered their trucks to transport pickets and shared in the picketing. A significant number of our casualties in battles with the cops were from among this category of workers. After the union had been consolidated, they continued to play a constructive role. Like other members of the organization, they looked upon those of their own kind who took an antilabor stance as finks and dealt with them accordingly.

Our course had checkmated the divisive schemes of the bosses. In Minneapolis the truck drivers and allied workers had emerged as a power, and the union was able to march forward in advancing the interests of all its members.

These experiences became an important asset when we launched an organizing drive in the over-the-road industry in 1938. There we found an even more complicated situation concerning independent owner-operators. Firms holding carrier rights issued by the government employed many of these independents, paying them flat rates by the mile, ton, or trip for rig and driver. It was truly a cut-throat setup. Diverse methods were used to heap inordinate trucking costs upon the owner-operators, thereby shaving down their earnings as drivers. At the same time, devious patterns were woven to confuse the true nature of the employer-worker relationship and turn the individuals involved in an antiunion direction.

Propaganda attacks were launched—especially by legal tricksters claiming to speak for the owner-operators—which were calculated to discredit the IBT campaign. One such blast came from David I. Lipman, who purported to head a "Truck Owners and Operators Association." Through an article in the December 1939 issue of the *Transport*

*Driver*, a publication circulated among owner-operators, he sharply criticized Teamster Local 710 of Chicago. He charged the union with "lack of regard for the truckmen's interests" and claimed that the IBT had no right to represent his clients.

John T. O'Brien, then head of Local 710, asked me to prepare a statement for the local in reply to Lipman. I did so and sent the draft to him on January 3, 1940. It contained an extensive account of the owner-driver situation in over-the-road trucking. Concerning the confused patterns of employer-employee relations in

the industry, the statement said:

"The individual owner-operator is by the very nature of his position a composite in one degree or another of the two distinct factors in the over-the-road motor freight industry—the owners of trucks and the drivers. There is a more or less clearly defined category of individual owner-operators, and there are other categories called by that name but who are in reality something entirely different.

"There is the individual who owns one truck which he himself drives. Ordinarily he operates under lease in the exclusive service of one operating company. He represents the owner-operator type of driving service in its purest form and deserves the fullest measure of consideration for his special problems.

"It must also be recognized that even in this group there is a tendency to operate free-lance on a catch-as-catch-can basis. These individuals who operate in this manner are commonly referred to as gypsies, skimmers, wildcatters, etc., and are found

hauling for one company today, another tomorrow, and the next day trying to drum up business as a one-man company. They are a serious problem to the industry.

## Owner-driver-employer

"Even the most clearly defined type of owner-operator has a general tendency toward expansion, and the individual frequently becomes the owner of additional units of equipment. During this gradual process of accumulation he will first acquire one or two more pieces of equipment and will employ men to drive these while he continues as a driver of one of his units. As he continues to accumulate units he hires more and more men. This process transforms him into a combination owner-driver-employer.

"Finally he acquires enough equipment and hires enough men so that he must devote all or nearly all of his personal time to the problems of the management of his operations. He then is no longer in any sense a driver and is transformed into the status of an owner of trucks and an employer of men who does business with an operating company as a small fleet owner who hauls by subcontract under a lease system. Yet he continues to pose as an individual owner-operator and is erroneously posed as such by many others. We thus arrive at the ridiculous circumstance whereby, assuming such an individual to be the employer of ten men, which is not uncommon, the group is referred to as eleven individual owner-operators instead of being identified as an employer and ten employees, which is the true state of affairs.

"Occasionally a small fleet owner succeeds in acquiring the necessary operating certificates and permits and enough direct accounts to enable him to abandon his service under lease to an established operating company and to launch his own company. This action, which represents the realization in fact of the secret ambition of every 'gypsy' individual owner-operator, brings into the full light of day the true nature of the employer-employee relationship between the small fleet owner and the men who drive his trucks.

"It now becomes clear how many operating companies have cleverly devised a scheme whereby they obtain driving service at substandard wages. The drivers are held in a state of continuous confusion by the ever-changing employment and equipment ownership relations between the drivers and small fleet owner on the one hand and between the small fleet owner and the operating company on the other. The operating company evades all responsibility for employment relations with the drivers by hiring through the small fleet owner, who in turn far too frequently pays for driving service at varying substandard wage rates by a wide variety of methods."

With reference to the scope of Teamster

**Continued on Page 11**

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# Women and the Cuban Revolution

The excerpt below is from *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. The book includes speeches by Cuban president Fidel Castro and Vilma Espín, leader of the Federation of Cuban Women, on the rapid advances toward women's liberation registered as a result of the socialist revolution. The book also contains several important Cuban documents: the 1975 "Thesis: On the Full Exercise of Women's Equality," the text of the Maternity Law for Working Women, and major excerpts from the Cuban Family Code.

The portion that follows is from a speech by Espín on the contributions by women in

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

the revolutionary struggles on the island from its conquest by the Spanish colonizers and the struggle for independence to the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista through a popular revolution by workers and farmers in 1959. Copyright © 1981 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY VILMA ESPÍN

When the revolution came to power there were tens of thousands of prostitutes, hundreds of thousands of illiterate women, 70,000 domestic servants. Gambling was a big business, vice and corruption were encouraged, and the population was denied its most elementary rights: access to education,



Juventud Rebelde

**Cuban women's anti-aircraft artillery and antitank unit in Angola, 1988. Cuban volunteers helped defeat invasion of Angola by racist apartheid regime of South Africa.**

to medical care, to hospitals, to recreation. All that was reserved for the privileged classes alone.

Our women, as was true of our people in general, lacked an adequate ideological and cultural level. But, as with the rest of the people, they expressed their rejection of the dictatorship that tried to drown the growing popular rebellion in blood, that unleashed a ferocious repression, and that murdered our best sons and daughters while trying to rob our nation of its last vestige of dignity and fighting spirit.

How many mothers lost their sons and daughters? Twenty thousand martyrs gave their lives to make Cuba the first free territory in America!

That's why Cuban women joyously and enthusiastically came out to cheer the march of the victorious Rebel Army through towns and cities on that glorious day in January 1959. It was an army of peasants and workers symbolizing the revolutionary victory and the end of more than a half century of pain.

What did the triumphant revolution offer our women? A new life, filled with possibilities and prospects, in which their deepest

dreams might become reality. A society in which that which is most precious to us all—our children's future—would be assured. A different society, where the people would be masters and mistresses of their own destiny, where they would exert their rights fully, where new values would come into being. The triumph offered our women the opportunity to study and to work, it offered them economic security, thereby putting an end to oppression and hardship. It opened prospects of health care, of social security. For women, the revolution meant the opportunity to attain human dignity.

At the triumph of our revolution there were women's groups of a social nature in our country, and others that belonged to different political movements. Throughout the first months of 1959 new groups appeared, in support of the different revolutionary laws or coming out for women's rights....

At first our grouping was called the Congress of Cuban Women for the Liberation of Latin America. By August 23, 1960, with nearly 70,000 women integrated into revolutionary tasks, the single, all-encompassing women's organization was founded and Fidel provided the name: Federation of

Cuban Women.

Those were the first steps, steps which established unity, got the women's organization off the ground, and gave women a consciousness of their force in numbers.

The revolutionary government had already begun the process of radically transforming our country's economic, political, and social structure. The Agrarian Reform Law had been passed as well as the nationalization of the country's sugar mills, the Urban Reform Law, the nationalization of banks, foreign industry, and capital.

Women were firm in their support of these laws that granted the people the benefits of their own wealth, a wealth which for so long had been plundered by the capitalists. The clash with imperialism was to become even sharper with the passage of measures. From the very triumph of the revolution, we began to feel imperialism's aggressions and threats. Women, along with all our people, demanded the right to prepare themselves to be useful in defending their homeland.

Everyone's contribution was necessary. We had to organize and train the enthusiastic, firm, and powerful mass that our women made up. Thus the importance of our work aimed at winning over more and more women, uniting them, and with them, building a conscious force for the cause of the revolution.

The federation initiated first-aid courses. Through our work at the delegation level we incorporated tens of thousands of comrades into the National Revolutionary Militia.

The organization put all its efforts into raising the ideological, political, and cultural level of our women, in order to obtain, in the shortest possible time, their incorporation, their participation in the great tasks our country was already carrying out.

We had to change women's mentality—accustomed as they were to playing a secondary role in society. Our women had endured years of discrimination. We had to show her her own possibilities, her ability to do all kinds of work. We had to make her feel the urgent needs of our revolution in the construction of a new life. We had to change both woman's image of herself and society's image of women.

We started our work by means of simple tasks that allowed us to reach out to women, to get them out of the narrow, limited framework they moved in. To explain the revolution's purpose to them, and the part they would have to play in the process.

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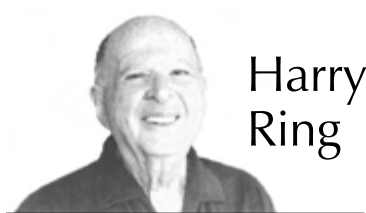
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**Read it and rebel department**—Cops in Montclair, California, shut down a boarding school charged with extreme abuse of



Harry Ring

children. It's alleged that the children were beaten, handcuffed to beds, and locked into bathrooms. Police confiscated handcuffs and shackles. The operators of the Ministerial Christian Academy face a \$200-a-day penalty for operating without a license.

**Ugly indeed**—When Orange County, California, went bankrupt a decade ago, the bond peddlers scooped up a bundle. Now county officials suggest a repeat performance. They declare they will have to slash \$50 million from the present budget. What will be cut? The *Los Angeles Times* puts it bluntly: "The poor, elderly and troubled youth." It describes the slated cuts as "ugly."

**Class history**—"Long before the invention of payroll accounting software, Malachi and other biblical prophets were condemning employers who, in his words, 'oppress the hiring in his wages'"—Internet, *Accountant's World*.

**P.S.**—The accountants' group (apparently those who work for a living, not the big-time corporate crooks) say that when employers get caught chiseling on low-wage workers it usually comes down to civil suits. Instead, the accountants declare, "criminal prosecution seems more appropriate." For sure. But strong unions with strong enforcement would be much better.

**Progress report**—"The number of death penalty convictions in North Carolina has dropped in each of the past five years and a prosecutor said it's because juries have become more sceptical of the justice system."—*USA Today*.

**Pet peeves?**—You don't have to

hold any brief for the Democratic Party to feel creepy. A Denver *Rocky Mountain News* columnist tagged it, ironically, "McCarthy was right." Colorado Rep. James Walker e-mailed: "The Democratic Party is controlled by the liberal labor unions, the radical feminists... the radical environmentalists, the Hollywood pro-pornography crowd and the homosexuals/lesbians."

**Brings tears to our eyes**—It was headlined, "Study calls for better treatment of workers." One of several studies pointed to Bank of America offering "subsidized" child care and Levi Strauss offering "emergency" loans. The study notes that a third of the work force gets less than \$15,000 a year. Any

suggestion of wage increases? Don't be silly.

**All in due time**—"Ohio—The federal government will study whether air emissions from a plant that recycles used oil and commercial fuels poses a health risk. A group of residents who live near PermaFix in southwest Ohio asked the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry for the study. They say fumes from the facility causes headaches and nausea."—News item.

**How about a 'Militant' subscription?**—The percentage of people who believe what they read in the papers is down from 80 percent in 1985 to 59 percent in 2003.

# U.S. forces launch new attacks on Najaf in Iraq

Continued from front page

him. Alongside the military assault, U.S. commanders are seeking to build opposition to al-Sadr among other Shiite Muslim leaders. The aim is to isolate him and pave the way for more decisive military action.

U.S. president George Bush said in his May 8 radio address that recent revelations of torture of Iraqi prisoners by their U.S. captors will not deter Washington from its military offensive.

On May 10, U.S. troops reportedly destroyed al-Sadr's headquarters in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. U.S. armored vehicles pummeled the walls of the compound, which had been evacuated. During firefights in Sadr City the day before, occupation forces said they killed 19 Iraqis whom they described as militiamen loyal to al-Sadr.

At the same time, hundreds of Mahdi Army fighters launched attacks in the southern cities of Basra and Amara in opposition to patrols by British troops, which occupy that area of the country as part of the U.S.-led coalition. According to media reports, the attacks were an attempt by al-Sadr's forces to open up new fronts in the conflict to relieve the pressure they face in Najaf and elsewhere.

At least two Iraqis were killed and four British soldiers were wounded during the ensuing clashes in Basra. The city, Iraq's second largest, is 340 miles southeast of Baghdad. The occupying soldiers forced their way into the Hanaya neighborhood and surrounded al-Sadr's headquarters, initiating a standoff that lasted several hours, punctuated by at least one gun battle.

Basra's pro-occupation governor has announced the formation of an Iraq "rapid reaction" force to be used against the Mahdi Army.

The capture of the governor's office involved "the first deep thrust by U.S. forces into the city since Sadr's militia all but took control of it a month ago," reported the May 7 *Washington Post*. U.S. forces were equipped with tanks, armored vehicles, and Humvees. When the Mahdi Army tried to expel the invaders using rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and rockets, up to 41 Iraqis were killed.

On the day of the Najaf raid, U.S. military officers said they had killed 21 Iraqis in Kufa, where al-Sadr is reportedly based at present. In Karbala, another city in the

area, armored cars and rocket-equipped helicopters were used in an assault on an office allegedly providing shelter to Mahdi Army forces.

The Associated Press also reported May 8 that occupation forces had arrested al-Sadr's "main representative" in the southern city of Nasiriyah, which is patrolled by Italian troops.

**Divide and rule in Najaf**

U.S. officers in command of the 2,500 troops surrounding Najaf and Kufa say they are holding back from a full-scale assault on al-Sadr's forces. "We're not going to go wading into Najaf. We know how sensitive it is," said Brig Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the deputy director of U.S. military operations in Iraq.

"I think people had the wrong impression we were going to destroy Najaf. This is a place where we want to use the least amount of force," said Brig. Gen. Mark Hertling.

The U.S. officers are trying to reassure Shiite leaders that they are not planning to relaunch attacks on religious sites, where they claim Mahdi Army fighters are holed up.

After U.S. forces overran the governor's office in Najaf, the civilian head of U.S. occupation forces, Paul Bremer, appointed Adnan al-Zorfi as the city's new governor. Al-Zorfi served time in prison under the Saddam Hussein regime, and also took part in the 1991 Shiite uprising against Baghdad following the invasion of Iraq by Washington and its allies.

The BBC said that al-Zorfi "denounced Mr. Sadr and called on the MA [Mahdi Army] to disarm, telling a news conference in Baghdad that Najaf had virtually died as a city."

A number of Shiite leaders have called on al-Sadr to agree to surrender and to disband the Mahdi Army by May 15. Under the deal he would present himself for trial under U.S. charges that he organized the killing of a pro-occupation Shiite cleric.

In a May 7 address in Kufa, al-Sadr denounced the torture of Iraqi prisoners by the occupying forces. "What sort of freedom and democracy can we expect from you [Americans] when you take such joy in torturing Iraqi prisoners?" he asked. U.S. forces are "doing the same acts done by the small devil Saddam," he said.

before dragging injured prisoners face down back to their cells.

- The Special Operations Response Team (SORT) at Chicago's notorious Cook County Jail has been implicated in scores of incidents of racist terror against prisoners. On Feb. 4, 1999, SORT members with four unmuzzled police dogs ordered 400 prisoners to leave their cells. According to an Internal Affairs Division report cited in a Reuters article, the guards forced the prisoners to strip and herded them into a common area where most were forced to face the wall with their hands behind their heads. Other prisoners were forced to lie on the floor where they were stomped and kicked. Any prisoner facing the wall who turned his head was struck with a wooden baton, the report says.

The opposition cleric has targeted not just the occupying forces, but Iraqis accused of collaboration with them. They include laborers who work inside the Green Zone, the area in Baghdad where the occupation authority has its fortified headquarters.

"They threatened the laborers in this neighborhood," said Hussein Ali, 24, referring to the Mahdi Army. He

was speaking after a car bomb exploded at the edge of the Green Zone May 6, killing six Iraqis and one U.S. soldier.

With the costs of the war and occupation continuing to mount, the White House asked Congress for an additional \$25 billion for the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan for the year beginning in October. Previously, Bush administration of-



U.S. soldier frisks men at checkpoint outside southern city of Kufa April 29. Some 2,500 U.S. troops surround Najaf, six miles away.

ficials had said they would hold off such requests until the end of the year.

Indicating the bipartisan support for the war and occupation, Senate Armed Service Committee member Jack Reed, Democrat from Rhode Island, said that the request was too low, "given the increased tempo of operations as seen in April and the need for the long-term deployment of troops."

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



**May 25, 1979**

President Carter says the energy crisis is "the moral equivalent of war."

That's the way the oil trust sees it—as a war against American working people. The gasoline crisis now gripping the country is the latest offensive in that war.

The rip-off at the gas pumps has outraged workers. That anger has even forced some sections of the government to lift a bit of the curtain on what's going on:

- Sen. Thomas Eagleton (D-Mo.) said May 15 that sixteen major oil companies had made profits on domestically produced crude oil ranging from 144 percent to 389 percent of the cost of production.

- The Federal Trade Commission admits it has evidence that oil companies have not made full use of available supplies of crude oil and that "the current gasoline shortage may be contrived."

Despite the refusal of the government to act, the measures needed to meet this crisis are simple.

The first thing we need to do is to find out the truth about what is happening.

How much oil and gas are really in the ground?

How much oil and gas are in the pipelines or storage tanks right now?

What is the real capacity of oil refineries already in operation?

What are the real profits the industry is making?

Instead of challenging Exxon, Mobil, and the other energy giants, the government is protecting their secrets and covering up their massive frauds against working people.



**May 24, 1954**

The long fight against Jim Crow segregation in the public schools won an important legal and moral victory on May 17 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that such segregation is unconstitutional. But the fight is not yet finished or won.

The Court decided unanimously that the pernicious 58-year-old "separate but equal" doctrine is unconstitutional when it is applied to public schools. This knocks out one of the props of the Jim Crow system. Its effect will be to strengthen the movement of the Negro people and their allies to get rid of other legal props and to increase their confidence in their ability to achieve the abolition of the Jim Crow system as a whole.

But saying that segregation is unconstitutional is not the same thing as effectively prohibiting it. The Court ruled that school segregation is illegal, but it put off any ruling on WHEN or HOW this illegal practice should be stopped. Some hard fights will have to be fought and some difficult obstacles will have to be cleared away before Jim Crow will actually be driven out of the schools.

The Court had the power to rule on May 17 that since segregation violates the Constitution, it should be discontinued at once. But the Court did not exercise this power. Instead, it refused altogether to make any ruling on the time when segregation should be ended or the method that should be used to end it—postponing these questions until next fall, when they will be put back on the court docket and argued all over again.

# Abuse rampant in U.S. prisons

Continued from Page 4

humiliate them.

- "Corrections experts," the *Times* article says, "report some of the worst abuses have occurred in Texas," whose prisons were under a consent decree for much of the 1990s because of violence by guards against inmates and overcrowding. The decree was imposed by a federal district judge after finding that guards in Texas lockups were overseeing a sex slave trade within the prisons.

- Guards at Texas's Brazoria County jail, in September 1996, videotaped—for "training purposes"—a mock drug raid that was staged on inmates. Prisoners were forced to strip and lie naked on the ground. Guards then prodded the prisoners with stun guns and forced them to crawl along the ground,



# Abu Ghraib: just like U.S. prisons

The most striking thing about the systematic humiliation and physical abuse U.S. military personnel have meted out to Iraqi prisoners over the last year is how much it mirrors daily practices rampant in U.S. prisons.

As the news reports on the front page show, prison guards in the United States often force male prisoners to wear women’s underwear or strip naked in front of others, put black hoods on inmates, beat prisoners bloody and then make them crawl on their knees, or shower them with racist slurs. What’s the purpose of this physical abuse and humiliation? To break the prisoners and keep the state and federal institutions stable.

These practices are not an aberration, administered by a few “rogue” guards. They are the *modus operandi* in the U.S. prison system. The prison guards are not civil servants. Just like cops, they are trained to use their clubs and guns to keep the prisoners under control.

Prisons under capitalism are not “correctional institutions.” They are not for therapy. Everything imposed on those behind bars has to do with breaking them and making them complicit with the horrors of how prisons are run under capitalism. This applies not only to the humiliating and violent practices of the prison guards, but even to the so-called educational programs of “prison reformists”—be it alcoholic treatment, sex offender, or substance abuse programs. Prisons are a degrading reflection of the values and brutalities of declining bourgeois society.

Everything is organized to turn prisoners—who in their immense majority are workers and farmers—against one another, to reinforce the worst dog-eat-dog values of capitalist society, to differentiate the incarcerated. The fight of the working class is the opposite. Not to organize anything through the prisons, or try to “reform” them. But to defend any prisoner against any brutality or arbitrariness in order to allow prisoners to take as much space as they can to break down the barriers that separate them from the rest of society and from their rights.

Washington’s foreign policy is simply an extension of its domestic policy. Millions around the world are outraged at the systematic abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. military police and intelligence officers. But it should be no surprise. A number of those already brought under charges got their training in U.S. jails. And they got their orders from others higher up in the military hierarchy to break the prisoners.

U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld claims the degradation imposed on Iraqi prisoners is “un-American.” Nothing can be further from the truth. These practices are as American as apple pie for *their* America—the America of the few billionaire families that rule the United States,

the America they are responsible for running and that they should be ashamed of.

But there is another America. That of the workers and farmers who have irreconcilable class interests with the capitalist rulers. Working people in the United States are not responsible for Washington’s brutalization of our brothers and sisters in Iraqi or U.S. prisons.

Democratic Party politicians are crying wolf by demanding Rumsfeld’s resignation—or his replacement with liberal Republican Colin Powell, who led the U.S. army in its “turkey shoot” of tens of thousands of fleeing Iraqis at the end of Washington’s war against Iraq in 1991.

Abuse of prisoners during times of war, however, has been an entirely bipartisan policy. It has been a feature of all imperialist wars—from the two world wars to Korea and Vietnam. The Democratic Party ran the White House during most of these wars. Liberals were secretaries of defense or chairmen of the joint chiefs of staff under Harry Truman, when Korean prisoners of war were treated like “oriental cattle”; under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, when the U.S. military locked Vietnamese prisoners in the “tiger cages”; and under Clinton when “extraordinary renditions”—that is, sending prisoners to other countries to be tortured in order to “confess”—became commonplace after the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

This has also been the hallmark of those imperialist powers that criticize the Bush administration and cry “United Nations” to advance their own predatory interests against those of the U.S. empire. Just ask the Algerian people about the conduct of the French army, for example.

The U.S. rulers are running up against the growing view, in bourgeois public opinion worldwide, that torture is unsupportable. The exposure of the unconscionable conditions and brutality facing hundreds of prisoners at the U.S. military garrison at Guantánamo—and formal protests from countries whose citizens are incarcerated there—paved the way for the revulsion surrounding the revelations of systematic abuse in Iraq.

No new secretary of defense, or Democrat in the White House, will bring a halt to the torture of Iraqi prisoners. The only way to fight for ending the abuse is to demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and other occupying troops from Iraq. We should raise the same demand for U.S., NATO, and UN troops in Afghanistan, Korea, the Balkans, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Bring them home now!

# Union victory at Hunts Point, N.Y.

**Continued from front page**

ballot box during the election. He said the efforts by the owners to undercut the organizing drive continued up to the last minute. “One boss had his son come in to vote!” he said. “I had never seen him before. He came in to vote and told us what his name was.” His vote was one of the 10 being challenged.

The union immediately began spreading the message of this victory to the hundreds of meat packers in the market, a 60-acre complex that is home to 47 meat companies, most of which are not yet organized.

Two days after the election union officials passed out flyers to workers in many of the other shops at Hunts Point. “UFCW Local 342 has BIG VICTORY at GARDEN MANOR FARMS!” read the headline of the flyer, which was published in English and Spanish. “The workers at Garden Manor refused to let their bosses cheat them out of their legal right to have a union and voted on May 4th to join Local 342 and get their first union contract,” the flyer said.

“Additionally, Local 342 thanks all of its members in the Market for their support and encouragement to the Garden Manor workers’ cause. It makes a big difference! Increasing our membership in the market increases the bargaining strength for all Market workers!

“So if any Local 342 members run into one of the workers from Garden Manor, shake their hand and tell them welcome to Local 342!”

In July of 2003 Garden Manor Farms workers carried out a one-week strike to protest company efforts to stall the union representation election. Workers from various shops in the market came over during their lunch breaks to show support for the workers in their efforts.

Copies of the flyers were hand-distributed to workers in various shops and extra copies left in some of the coffee shops in the market. Two were taped to the wall outside the bank in the market where many workers go to cash their checks on Fridays.

Amid handshakes and congratulatory hugs outside the plant, workers expressed their gratitude to Raffy Castillo, staff organizer for UFCW Local 342, for his help in the more than one-year effort. “It was you guys who did it,” said Castillo. “It was because you guys stood together you were able to win.”

Jimenez said workers would meet almost daily at the restaurant next to their shop. “We would all the time be

telling the guys, ‘stay together, stay together,’” he said. “When the bosses started offering people things, talking to them like they were going to start treating them good we told them: ‘Don’t let the boss confuse you. Before 342 came in here they didn’t do anything for you. Keep together, keep strong, and we will get a contract.’”

In the course of the organizing drive the company attempted to derail the unionization effort by bringing in a “union” they claimed was already representing workers in the plant.

The vast majority of the production workers saw through the ruse and refused to sign on. One worker reported that only seven people, including clerical workers, signed up with Local 210—the company “union.”

Another challenge the workers confronted was the company use of temporary workers at the plant to avoid hiring workers as full-time employees. These would start at \$5.15 an hour. Jiménez said the company raised the pay for some of the temporary workers to \$8.50 or \$9 an hour after the union-organizing drive got underway to induce them to vote in favor of the company.

“These temporary workers aren’t stupid,” said Jimenez. “One of the guys who was always quiet told me he knew Local 210 was false, that it didn’t care about the workers, it cares about the company. He never saw a representative from 210. He always saw the Local 342 reps meeting with the workers, talking about the union benefits. That was the reason most of the temporary workers voted for the union. They were quiet because they are not in a position to talk about the union or they could be fired, but at the bottom of their hearts they knew they had to vote for Local 342 because that is their future.”

The election was organized as a choice between UFCW Local 342 and the company Local 210.

Workers report the company responded to the union victory with a speed-up effort in the days following the election. A job involving boxing beef top rounds coming off the butcher table is usually done with three workers. The day after the election the boss insisted one worker do the job. This worker ended up being sent to the hospital with a possible broken arm.

The new union members are now preparing to initiate negotiations with the company for their first contract.

*Don Mackle is a member of UFCW Local 342 and works in the Hunts Point Meat Market.*

# Meat packers in Buffalo Lake, Minnesota, lose union vote

BY TOM FISKE

BUFFALO LAKE, Minnesota—“We have been forced to defend ourselves a number of times,” a worker in the boning department at Minnesota Beef Industries—a beef slaughterhouse employing about 125 workers here—told the *Militant*. Buffalo Lake is a small town in Renville county, a farming area in central Minnesota, two hours west of the Twin Cities.

“In one case the plant manager tried to force a deboner to do the jobs of two workers,” he said. “Some workers got angry. The entire boning department stopped work for a half hour in protest. Another time the plant manager yelled at us at the start of a shift. We didn’t start work for a whole minute. We know we sent the manager a message. The company loses \$5,000 for each 20 minutes the line is down.” The meat packer asked that his name not be used.

In recent months there has been a union-organizing drive at the plant by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789. The workers’ anger against disrespect and other abuses by the bosses has fueled this resistance in the plant and the union-organizing drive.

A vote on union recognition took place May 5. The UFCW lost by 67-32.

“None of our problems are going to go away,” said the same worker. “They will just become worse. That’s what confronts us now.”

About a dozen meat packers spoke with *Militant* correspondents at a trailer park in town about the conditions they are resisting. They said there is no drinking fountain in the plant. Workers who do not come to work one day get their hourly pay lowered to entry-level wages, \$7 per hour, for the rest of the week. For a qualified deboner, this is a reduction in hourly pay from \$11 per hour to \$7 per hour for the week. “Robbery!” is how one worker described this. In addition, in the boning department workers average only 34 hours of work per week. Several workers commented that it is difficult to support their families at this level of income.

They said the plant manager treats them like animals. Two workers in the kill department said that in response to one particular abuse by the manager, workers there carried out a slowdown for an entire eight-hour day. In both the kill and boning departments, workers said they have been forced to continue working their regular jobs while injured. All the workers interviewed requested that their names not be used because of company threats against union supporters.

Bernie Hesse, an organizer for UFCW Local 789, said the union plans to file an objection to the election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). “Local 789 will be sticking with the workers at Minnesota Beef Industries,” Hesse told the *Militant*. “The workers showed a lot of courage. The vote showed only that a lot of workers were intimidated at the time of the election. The workers have already won in the sense that through their resistance within the plant they have sent a message to the company they won’t put up with the abuses going on. We will be appealing to the Labor Board.”

Prior to the election, the union had filed charges with the NLRB, alleging that management had threatened to call local police, who would in turn stop workers and take away their work permits and vehicles because they were “illegal.” Almost all the workers are immigrants from Mexico. The NLRB is investigating the complaint.

Four years ago UFCW Local 789 won a significant victory in a representation election at the Dakota Premium Foods beef slaughterhouse in South St. Paul, in a plant where similar conditions existed. The organizing drive was started during a seven-and-a-half-hour sit-down strike in the company cafeteria on June 1, 2000. More than two years of struggle were required by the workers after that vote—including many mobilizations of workers to the company offices, shows of support for the union, and collective acts of direct resistance—before the company, which had vowed never to sign a contract with the union, finally recognized the UFCW and agreed to a contract.

*Tom Fiske is a meat packer in Minneapolis. Bob Sorenson, a meat packer in St. Paul, contributed to this article.*

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# Truckers in 1930s

Continued from Page 7

jurisdiction in dealing with this situation, the answer to Lipman asserted:

“A man who owns the truck which he drives is merely an employee who is required to furnish his own tools as a condition of employment. He has a full legal right to be represented by a labor organization. The IBT will not relinquish this right, nor will it permit the issue to be confused by parading in alleged individual owner-operators who are in reality something entirely different. The true nature of these masqueraders has already been carefully defined above. . . .

“Those who are genuinely interested in the problems of the men who drive motor freight trucks across the highways will recognize that the IBT is approaching the problems of the individual owner-operators with the same serious consideration that it gives to the problems of the employed drivers [drivers employed on company-owned fleets]. The proper place for the individual owner-operator to get effective results is in the ranks of the IBT, shoulder to shoulder with the employed drivers.”

An area committee, composed of representatives from key local unions, had been set up to lead the Teamsters’ over-the-road campaign, to which Lipman and his kind were opposed. In dealing with the owner-operator question the committee had a clearly formulated perspective from the outset. The aim was to require leasing companies to pay individual owner-operators the cost of operating their equipment, plus its replacement value, plus the union scale as drivers.

It will be noted that the union was concerned only with the *cost* of operating the equipment, not with helping to secure any *profit* from the operation. If we had supported any notion of earning a profit on the vehicle itself, impetus would have been given to the petty-bourgeois aspirations inherent in the ownership of trucking equipment. Our aim was the opposite. We approached the equipment as expensive tools the individual owner-operators had been required to provide in order to get jobs as drivers. This served our objective, which was to make the leasing companies pay for the use of those tools, as though they were the owners. That would reduce their advantage down to having the owner-drivers buy the equipment initially, and there wouldn’t be much percentage for the operating companies in such an arrangement. To the extent that we could succeed in that course, the trend toward an increase in the use of owner-operated rigs could be reversed; and a healthier situation could be established, with trucking firms again using their own fleets, operated by drivers paid on a regular wage basis.

## Fleet drivers win gains

In striving toward that goal we were aided by gains registered in securing higher wages and better conditions for fleet drivers. Those accomplishments were noted by the owner-operators, many of whom began to realize that they, too, would be better

off as fleet drivers. As matters stood, however, they needed immediate help to secure the cost of operation of their equipment. In the rebuttal of Lipman’s allegations, union policy on this matter was described as follows:

“Payment for equipment service has been computed in a wide variety of forms, consistently to the benefit of the operating company and to the detriment of the owner-operator.

“Whatever the declared rate may have been, an elaborate system of deductions made the real earnings something considerably less. Almost all of the hazards of the road, including cargo damage and equipment layovers, not to mention personal layover expense, were transferred by the operating company onto the shoulders of the owner-operator. Fake charges for ‘spotting,’ ‘backup,’ ‘inspection,’ etc., further reduced his income until the owner-operator received very little actual compensation in the form of earnings which could be taken home to meet the household expenses.

“The IBT has again in this case sought to attack the problem at the root. Equipment service must now be paid for the full mileage operated, and there can be no deductions by the operating company for any reason whatsoever. A statement of legitimate charges may be presented to the owner-operator. However, if they are not legitimate he protests in advance of payment and is no longer in the position of trying to get money refunded which was improperly withheld from his pay.

“The operating company is now required to provide insurance, certificates, permits, travel orders, out-of-state vehicle tax, bridge tolls, etc., and to pay any legal charges involved if these are not properly provided. The owner-operator has been freed from the gouging methods of those companies which made compulsory the purchase of gasoline, oil, tires, repairs, etc., through a company agency, with an unearned profit extracted by the company at the expense of a further reduction in the owner-operator’s earnings.”

Apart from the cost of equipment operation, the union required that individual owner-drivers enjoy the same wages and conditions as all other drivers. These earnings had to be paid separately from money received for rental of equipment. This made it harder for the leasing companies to cheat the individual owner-operators. A passage in the reply to Lipman outlined the union’s approach:

“The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has sought through the new Area Over-the-Road Contract to correct this condition by placing employment responsibility where it rightfully belongs—on the shoulders of the operating company, which is now held responsible for the driver’s wages, social security tax, compensation insurance, etc., regardless of whether he is employed by the operating company or

## Scotland: postal workers strike Royal Mail to protest closure of Broxburn sorting office



Militant/Caroline Bellamy

WEST LOTHIAN, Scotland—Postal workers in Broxburn, West Lothian, picket the government postal company, Royal Mail, at the Broxburn sorting office during an April 26 one-day strike to protest the office’s closure. A Communications Workers Union (CWU) representative, Joe Dunnigan (second from left, with glasses), who has worked at Broxburn for eight years, told the *Militant*: “For more than six years we have been demanding a new sorting office in Broxburn, on health and safety grounds. Then, without consulting either the workers or the public, Royal Mail decided to close it, transferring us either to Livingston—a bus journey—or near Bathgate, which is two bus journeys away.” The new location will also mean that Broxburn residents have to travel farther to pick up mail. In response to the announcement of these plans, the CWU called a public meeting in February with local politicians and Royal Mail management. The event was attended by over 250 people, Dunnigan said, but “the bosses didn’t want to listen, they now view us as a business, not a service to the community. Today is the first day we should have started in the new offices. We are determined to stick to our guns—we’re balloting early next month on an overtime ban and work to rule. It’s in both our interests and that of the public. We’ve been given a lot of support today and we’re very encouraged.”

—CAROLINE BELLAMY

through a small fleet owner.

“Not least in importance in the general problem is the driver who is given a paper title to the truck by the operating company, usually on a deferred payment plan, and is then paid as an individual owner-operator, not as a legitimate business relationship, but as a subterfuge to escape the payment of the union wage scale.

“Thus we find that while there are men who drive as actual individual owner-operators and who have a real employment problem, there are other categories incorrectly referred to as owner-operators who vary, in different shades, from the truck driver who is being cheated out of his just compensation by the subterfuge of a fake truck sale, to the individual who is in reality a small fleet owner and an employer. If we intend to be logical we must begin by recognizing that the first problem for the individual owner-operator is to identify the malpractices committed in his name by the operating companies and then join hands with the employed drivers for their mutual protection.”

As can be seen from this sketch of the earlier situation, progress was being made in shaping a viable policy toward independent owner-operators in over-the-road trucking. But the process was suddenly cut short when the Trotskyists were witch-hunted out of the IBT and its leadership in 1941.

## Teamster bureaucracy

Since then the Teamster bureaucracy has reversed the trends we had set into motion. Democratic procedures used by the union’s area committee in the pre-1941 period have been replaced by dictatorial methods in the present-day IBT conferences. More concern is shown for the wishes of the employers than is manifested toward the needs of the workers. The problems of the fleet drivers are neglected in many respects. At the same time, there has been an increasingly pronounced growth of independent owner-operators; and the union officialdom has little inclination and even less ability to cope with the situation.

As a result, the owner-operators are ceasing to look upon the IBT as the organization through which they can undertake to alleviate the difficulties now confronting them. Those who remain members of the union are tending to organize themselves into factions, which act independently of the Teamster bureaucrats and, to an increasing extent, in cooperation with nonunion groups of owner-operators. Formations of

this kind are springing up in various parts of the country. Cut loose as they are from trade-union influence, factors that cause individual owner-operators to dream of becoming small fleet owners assume greater weight in the shaping of their policies. The negative aspects of that outlook impair the interests of all over-the-road drivers at a time when the union has become enfeebled because of bureaucratic misleadership.

Under those circumstances it becomes possible for the big trucking firms to mount a major attack on the IBT by maneuvering to intensify the hostility of owner-operators toward the organization. To the extent that they succeed in promoting such antiunion bias, every worker behind the wheel of a truck—owner-operators and fleet drivers alike—will be the ultimate victims. Only the bosses will be the gainers.

This danger can be averted through a shift in union policy toward application under modern conditions of the basic course that was being shaped prior to 1941. That would block the bosses from splitting the owner-drivers away from the organized labor movement. Instead, the catch-all category of independent owner-operators could be separated into its component parts. *Individual* owner-operators could be brought back into effective alliance with the drivers of company fleets. Small fleet owners, who masquerade under the designation “owner-operators,” could be sorted out and placed in the employer category where they belong. Class lines within the industry would again become much clearer, and the workers would be in a better position to fight collectively in defense of their mutual interests.

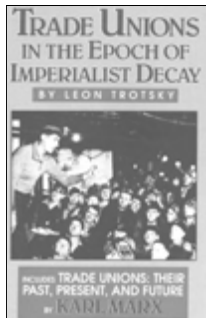
There is an objective potential for such a turn in union policy that is manifested in diverse, confused form within the present opposition to the Teamster bureaucrats. What the situation now requires is the shaping of a course of action in support of the workers’ just demands, aimed in the first instance at the bosses and their government. Within that framework, steps can be taken to oust the IBT bureaucrats from office, establish democratic procedures within the union, and make it a fitting instrument to serve the workers’ cause.

Achievement of those ends requires an oppositional formation at all levels of the IBT based on a class-struggle program and capable of using class-struggle methods. Every militant worker and especially the socialists among them should be on the alert for realistic openings to help get such a movement started.

## Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

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At the opening of the 21st century, trade unions in the United States continue to weaken. A smaller percentage of workers are members than at any time since the 1920s. Meanwhile, labor officials finagle mergers to maintain their dues base and pour tens of millions of dollars into electing to public office one or another of the candidates of the employers’ imperialist parties, thus further weakening the labor movement.

But militant workers resisting employer assaults have begun relearning what a strike is—how a strike is fought, how to reach out for solidarity and extend it to others, how a strike can be won. Through involvement in such struggles, they become more interested in ideas about how the entire system of exploitation, oppression, and disrespect facing working people can be changed. They start reading more broadly, especially books, pamphlets and newspapers suggested by fellow union fighters who they’ve come to trust and who are experienced in political activity in the interests of the working class. They become open to bolder perspectives.

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# Thousands march for Maori rights

BY TERRY COGGAN

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Some 20,000 people, from high school students to meat packers to tribal leaders, marched here May 5 to protest government legislation attacking Maori use of coastal lands and waters. Undeterred by rain squalls and gale-force gusts of wind, the overwhelmingly Maori marchers rallied outside parliament building to express opposition to the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, due for its first reading the next day.

Presented by the Labour government, the bill would strip Maori of their right to file claims registering customary ownership of areas of the foreshore and seabed. Marchers explained that the bill would threaten the livelihood of some and the fishing rights of others. For tens of thousands of Maori, they said, it represents a new government confiscation of land, waters, resources, and national rights.

Maori, an oppressed nationality, are the indigenous people of New Zealand, numbering around 15 percent of the total population of 4 million. They are also a key part of the industrial working class and its unions, and of broader layers of working people in town and country.

The May 5 protest was the culmination of a national march—or *hikoi*—that set out from the far north of the North Island April 22. Marches and rallies, often drawing thousands, were held in cities and towns along the way. A second *hikoi*, departing May 3, traveled down the North Island's east coast, converging with the first in Wellington, the capital city, two days later.

The Wellington march was punctuated by the banners of tribes from every part of the country. In the lead was the white flag and carved marker pole, or *pouwhenua*, from the 1975 Maori land march, which heralded an upsurge in struggles by Maori against discrimination and for national rights.

With songs and traditional chants in Maori, the protest had an air of affirmation and celebration of the gains in language, culture, and national pride Maori have won in recent decades.

Marchers came from major cities and smaller towns, and included many from isolated rural areas. There were many elders, including a number in wheelchairs or on crutches. These working people mingled alongside politicians, tribal leaders, professionals, and businesspeople, some with an interest in commercial development of the seabed and foreshore.

Car convoys from the two *hikoi*, each numbering 100 vehicles, made an impressive sight as they drove into the city on the morning of May 5. Bus after bus brought people from tribes around the country, some arriving at dawn at the assembly point. Later in the day feeder marches rolled in from nearby Victoria University and the Wellington suburb of Newtown.

A paua fisherman from Kaikoura in the South Island told *Militant* reporters that his Ngai Tahu tribe had organized three busloads of people to travel to Wellington. From the opposite direction, five carriage-loads of marchers belonging to the Tainui tribe came down by train from Auckland and the Waikato region.

A contingent of students from a Maori-language high school—or *kura kaupapa*—that had suspended classes to join in, formed one of the many groups of students participating.

Wayne Marumaru, a meat worker from Taranaki, told the *New Zealand Herald* that he had taken five days' leave to be on the *hikoi*. "I can't remember the last time I took annual leave," he said. "I work six days a week and sometimes up to 70 hours, but my wairua [spirit] told me I should be here."

Rae Morrison, who traveled down to Wellington from the small town of Taneatua, told the *Militant*, "They say it's the biggest gathering of Maori since World War II, and I can well believe it. The people have never been so united."

Marchers expressed anger at Prime Minister Helen Clark's statement that the *hikoi* was a small group of "haters and wreckers." Clark refused to meet the march at parliament, sending the deputy prime minister in her place, along with Maori Members of Parliament from the Labour Party.

Refuting Clark's comments, participants described how Maori communities in towns along the route of the *hikoi* had mobilized people, skills, and resources to house and feed—with sit-down dinners and packed lunches—hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of marchers and supporters. Many *hikoi* participants were recruited through tribal organizations, using tribal radio stations and internet sites as well as meetings and word of mouth.

## Government land-grab

Placards saying "Foreshore legislation is confiscation" and "Governments past and present have legalized theft of Maori



Some 5,000 Maori and supporters join march in Auckland April 27, to defend Maori land rights. Protests culminated in May 5 rally of 20,000 in Wellington.

Militant/Malcolm McCallister

land" expressed the views of most marchers toward the new legislation.

The bill represents the government's reaction to a decision by the Court of Appeals in June 2003 in favor of a suit by eight Maori tribes. The Maori leaders sought clearance to ask the Maori Land Court to grant them freehold title to areas of the foreshore and seabed in the Nelson-Marlborough area, to be used for fish and shellfish farming ventures. The tribes charged the local government with discrimination after having applications for marine farming licenses repeatedly turned down.

The foreshore is defined as the area of beach between the high and low water marks.

The Court of Appeal ruling challenged the longstanding assumption that the government owned all such areas not in private hands. Tribal leaders point out that ownership of these areas has never been ceded by Maori. They therefore believe that, under the separate laws that govern Maori land, they have a right to lodge claims to customary areas of foreshore and seabed.

The new bill would extinguish this right, placing the foreshore and seabed under

government ownership. The one-third of foreshore currently under freehold title, which is mainly owned by non-Maori, would be exempt.

The legislation offers no compensation for this loss of legal redress. It would allow Maori very limited rights to continue with tribal activities, provided they have been carried on uninterruptedly and in a wholly traditional manner since 1840.

Te Ope Mana A Tai, a tribal group spearheading opposition to the bill and the restrictions on commercial enterprise, pointed out in a leaflet distributed at the march that "other users of the foreshore and seabed over the last 164 years have not been limited to 1840s technology in development of ports and marine farms."

## Land at center of struggle

For 150 years, the question of title to and use of land has been at the center of the Maori struggle against dispossession and discrimination. In 1860 the colonial settler government, established by London, stated that 21 million acres remained in tribal hands—less than a third of the country. Today Maori own around 3 million acres.

Separate legislation and the Maori Land Court have governed ownership of Maori land since 1865. Historically these have been used to successively rob Maori of their lands. It is this same legislation that the government is now denying Maori the right to use to claim areas of foreshore and seabed.

While for some on the march, access to the foreshore and seabed opens the possibility of business ventures, for others it means potential jobs in marine farming or other activities. For example, at the small community of Potaka on the North Island's east coast, local Maori have built and launched their own aquaculture center.

Ngamano Ratana, who lives near Wanganui, told the *Militant*, "It's not only the foreshore. It's the riverbeds too. It affects access to seafood, shellfish, eeling—a natural resource our people turn to feed themselves for big gatherings, and for their families. When I've had hard times, I've often gone and accessed these natural resources because I couldn't afford food at the shop."

Some expressed concern that if the government took over the foreshore and seabed it could be privatized, like government-owned concerns in the past.

The march took place against the backdrop of the growing capitalist crisis, and the rulers' attacks on working people, which have a disproportionate impact on working people who are Maori.

In recent months Clark has said that her government will review affirmative action programs and other measures won by Maori. The statement followed a storm of propaganda against so-called special rights for Maori, led by opposition National Party leader Donald Brash.

On May 6, in front of a packed public gallery and with many protesters outside, the bill passed its first reading. Two of Labour's seven Maori MPs voted against it. One of them, Tariana Turia, a member of the Cabinet, earlier announced that she will resign May 17, and will contest the resulting by-election.

Some of the forces involved in organizing the march are looking to rapidly form a new Maori political party to capitalize on Maori discontent with Labour, which has traditionally enjoyed Maori support.

# Polisario envoy to tour New Zealand

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Kamal Fadel, a representative of the Polisario Front, the independence movement from the country of Western Sahara in northwest Africa, will tour New Zealand from May 25 to June 2. He will visit Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch to speak at public meetings and on campuses.

The Polisario Front is leading the struggle of the Saharawi people for independence from Moroccan occupation. Western Sahara is on the northwest coast of Africa between Morocco and Mauritania. Previously a Spanish colony, it has been occupied by Morocco since 1975, when Spain withdrew in the face of a rising independence struggle led by Polisario. The occupation has been backed by the governments of the United States, France, and Spain, with Washington being the leading military supplier of the Moroccan monarchy.

Tens of thousands of Saharawis fled the Moroccan invasion to refugee camps in the Algerian desert, where the bulk of the population has lived for nearly three decades. Fadel will have returned from a recent visit to the camps.

The Saharawi people fought a war against the Moroccan occupation forces from 1975 until 1991, when both parties agreed to a United Nations-brokered cease-fire. The Moroccan regime has built a massive sand wall to keep the Polisario Front out of Moroccan-occupied territory, which comprises some eighty percent of the country. Today Western Sahara is partitioned by this wall, which extends for 1,500 miles down the length of the county, is fortified with barbed wire and land mines, and is guarded by more than 120,000 Moroccan troops. Last October, the Moroccan government rejected a UN-brokered plan to hold a referendum on the status of Western Sahara, which Polisario

had agreed to accept.

Kamal Fadel is Polisario's representative based in Sydney, Australia. To help organize meetings for Fadel or assist the tour, contact Annalucia Vermunt at annalucia@chn.quik.co.nz

**Wellington:** Thurs., May 27, 1 p.m., Victoria University, Rm. 304, Cotton Bldg. tel: John Cao (04) 4636108

**Christchurch:** Thurs. May 27, 7:30 p.m., PEETO, Corner of Peterborough and Madras St. tel: Annalucia Vermunt (03) 3773834

**Lincoln:** Fri., May 28, 12:40 p.m., Totara Rm., Union Building, Lincoln University. tel: Jo Newman (03) 325 3808

**Auckland:** Monday, May 31, 7:30 p.m., St. Columba Centre, 40 Vermont St., Ponsonby. tel: Felicity Coggan (09) 5795707